This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

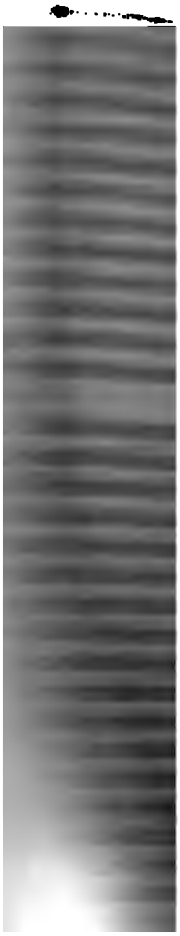
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 06826744 6



wd, the voice of one who stands ready
of his own beloved wife, bidding him
e man in his martyrdom. And there
hantly, perhaps even praising God in
nds, with her eyes lifted to Heaven,
of thankfulness, that her husband is
a death.

imen of a multitude of cases that show
the heart of a martyr. But we need
rtyrs to illustrate our position: in the
ffering we are often surprised by an
t would seem adequate to the endur-
e seen the naturally timid female, so
through the dark valley, that I have
is a spirit of noble daring there that
feeble to vanquish; that heart would
nly even amidst the tortures of the
mother dying with a cluster of little
and their father was there too in the
d and a sot: and her eyes had not
rs before the darkness of death came
g hour was like an hour of jubilee;
w, and clasped her withered hands,
balls, and the last expressions that
sions of thankfulness, of triumph,
p away from such scenes as these
an's power to endure; but scenes
general character are occurring
is a witness to the truth which
ou.

to illustrate the Christian's
contemplate the *source* from
ich, it is communicated. The
diately to Christ—"I can do
engtheneth me."

ntemplated in the character
has all power in heaven and
eby he is qualified to be the
ll its interests, to manage all
ants. Hereby especially he
at large, but to every indi-
l strength. It is through the
each becomes a subject of his
ely reaches such a spiritual
his kingdom in heaven. The
saints, then, belongs peculiarly
eward which crowns his media-

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Original—Monthly.

FROM LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY REV. J. M. SHERWOOD.

VOL. XXV.

NEW-YORK:
PUBLISHED BY J. V. PETTIS,
120, NASSAU STREET.

1851.

CONTENTS OF VOL. XXV.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
434733
ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

1851.

SERMON.		PAGE.
DXXXVIII.—Confessions of Dying Men	By Rev. Joel Hawes, D.D.	1
DXXXIX.—The Power of Christianity	By Rev. W. B. Sprague, D.D.	17
DXL.—The Character and Death of David*	By Rev. G. N. Judd, D.D.	29
DXLI.—Influence after Death	By Rev. J. M. MacDonald.	43
Living after Death	Editor.	50
DXLII.—The Great Revealer	By Rev. Thos. E. Vermilye, D.D.	53
DXLIII.—The Gospel a Savor of Life or of Death	By Rev. J. M. Sherwood.	68
DXLIV.—The Sinner dead unto God	By Rev. A. T. Chester, D.D.	77
DXLV.—The Joy of the Angels	By Rev. J. N. Granger.	88
Christian Activity	Editor.	98
DXLVI.—Sympathy in the Preachers as an Element of Success in the Ministry	By Rev. J. Few Smith.	101
DXLVII.—The Spirit returning to God	By Rev. R. E. Pettison	115
DXLVIII.—Religion of the Heart and of the Life.	By Rev. Theo. D. Woolsey, D.D.	125
DXLIX.—The Little Leaven	By Rev. Enoch Pond, D.D.	136
DL.—Retribution provided for in the Laws of Nature.	By Rev. W. T. Hamilton, D.D.	149
DLI.—Gain from Christ's Exaltation	By Rev. D.B. Coe.	162
DLII.—The Duty of Christians in reference to Legal Prosecutions.	By Rev. G A. Leutner, D.D.	173
DLIII.—The Ministry of the Gospel	By Rev. Edwin F. Hatfield, D.D.	185
DLIV.—Live Peaceably with all Men	By Rev. Mark Tucker, D.D.	197
DLV.—Legal and Gospel Systems Compared	By Rev. Thos. M. Clark, D.D.	206
DLVI.—The Comparative Blessedness of the Christian's Old Age.	By Rev. J. Guernsey.	214
DLVII.—The Believer's Peace	By Rev. David Magie, D.D.	221
DLVIII.—The Rejected Call of Wisdom	By Rev. Albert Barnes.	232
DLIX.—The Danger and Evil of Departing from God	By Rev. E. N. Kirk.	245
DLX.—The Religious Feelings and Activities of the Unregenerate not Genuine Piety	By Rev. R. H. Seeley.	253
DLXI.—The Perseverance of the Saints	By Rev. A. J. Fennel	269
DLXII.—The Dying Thief; or, Marks of an Accepted Faith.	By Rev. W. T. Hamilton.	282

* Funeral Sermon of the late Dr. Porter, Catskill, N.Y.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 1. Vol. XXV.] JANUARY, 1851. [Whole No. 281.

SERMON DXXXVIII.

A NEW YEAR'S SERMON FOR 1851.

By the Rev. JOEL HAWES, D. D.,

HARTFORD CONNECTICUT.

CONFESSIONS OF DYING MEN.

"It is appointed unto men once to die."—Hebrews 9: 27.

The fact asserted in this text is admitted by all; but how few appear to feel its practical influence. Who would infer from the conduct and conversation of most men, that they believed themselves to be mortal, or that they expected anything less than that their residence on earth is to be perpetual? They live as carelessly, plan as confidently, and pursue the world with as much eagerness, as if they were exempted from change, and could set at defiance the attacks of disease and death. Yet they must die—must die soon, and may die suddenly; and after death cometh the judgment. This is the appointment of God, and in this war there is no discharge. It is wise, then, to consider our latter end, to be familiar with the thought of dying, often and seriously to consider what will be our feelings and views when we shall come to lie upon our death-bed, and feel that we are going into eternity. This is a duty which especially demands our attention now, as we have just taken leave of the old year, and are entering upon the unknown, untried scenes of a new one, which, to some of us, no doubt, will be the last year of life.

Let us, then, endeavor to bring the closing scene near, to think of ourselves as having reached the end of our earthly course, and about to take our final leave of the world and all its busy cares. The question arises, what, in such a case, would be our feelings, what the reflections that would press upon our minds with the greatest weight and solemnity? We may, indeed, die so suddenly, that we shall have no time to think till we think

LUTHER SEMINARY JAN 1907

in eternity. We may drop in a moment into the unseen world, as many do, without any warning of our end, till the blow is struck, and the spirit finds itself in the immediate presence of God. Or the last sickness may come in such a form as to rack the body with agonizing pain, put out the light of reason, and cloud the mind in wild delirium. But on supposition that we shall be notified of our approaching end by the usual precursors of death, and that the dying scene shall find us in the exercise of our reason, capable of reflecting upon the past, and anticipating the future, let us inquire how we shall feel, what will be our judgment as to our present course of life, and what our thoughts, as we draw near the invisible world, and know that we are standing on the verge of a boundless eternity. We cannot, indeed, know all that we shall feel and think in that solemn hour. It will be to each of us a new and untried scene, till we are actually called to pass through it, and learn from dying what it is to die. But it is certain we shall feel and think very differently from what we now do. On many subjects our views will be wholly changed; they will appear to us in an entirely new light, and awaken new feelings within, of which we can now form but a very faint conception. We know this from the nature of the case, and also from the feelings and views which are wont to be expressed by men when they come to die. We have seen many persons die, and we have authentic accounts of the manner in which many others died whom we did not see. Let us, then, study the experience of the dying. It is the last school of wisdom to which the children of men can be advanced; and as we shall all ere long be placed in that school, let us recall a few particulars respecting which the feelings and sentiments of men are wont to undergo a great change as they view themselves near to the close of life. As I shall illustrate the subject by a frequent recurrence to what persons have felt and said in that situation, I may entitle my discourse—CONFESSIONS OF DYING MEN.

1. In the first place, when men come to die, they are wont to feel, with a vividness of impression wholly unknown before, the shortness of life, and the unspeakable value of time. Viewed in prospect, or in the season of health and happiness, life usually seems long, and time is but little valued. To the young, a year is wont to appear longer than a whole life does to him who is about to depart out of it; and time hangs so heavily on their hands that they know not what to do with it. And even when they have attained to the meridian of their days, and their sun is on the decline, they usually have but a very faint impression of the shortness of life, or of the immense value of the hours that are flitting by them. Especially is this the case with the irreligious and worldly-minded. Immersed in the cares and

pursuits of earth and sense, they perceive not how rapidly the little span of life is wasting away, nor how soon all the time allotted them in this state of probation will have passed with the years beyond the flood. They still live under the delusive impression that they have time enough before them to accomplish all their plans, and to do what they please.

But when they come to die, the whole scene is changed. Life is then seen to be indeed but a vapor, that appeareth for a little moment, and then vanisheth away. All the months and years they have passed on earth are then compressed, as it were, into a point, and seem more like a dream than a reality. Hear how the worthies, whose names are recorded in the Bible, spoke on this subject, as they approached the close of life. "My days," says Job, "are swifter than a post, they are passed away as a shadow." "Remember how short thy time is," cries the Psalmist. "Behold thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; as for man, his days are as grass; in the morning it is green; in the evening it is cut down and withered." And the patriarch Jacob, though he had lived an hundred and thirty years, felt constrained to say, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."

Such are the feelings of all men at the close of life. It seems but a transient moment, and the events of it as a dream when one awaketh. Lord Chesterfield, though a skeptic, and devoted to a life of pleasure, was compelled to say, near the close of his days, "When I reflect upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, myself, I can hardly persuade myself that all the frivolous hurry and bustle and pleasure of the world are a reality; but they seem to have been the dreams of restless nights." Voltaire, after having spent a long life in blaspheming the Saviour, and opposing his Gospel, said to his physician on his dying-bed, "I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me six months of life." "O, time! time!" exclaimed the dying Altamont, "how art thou fled forever. A month! oh, for a single week! I ask not for years, though an age were too little for the much I have to do." Said Gibbon, "The present is a fleeting moment, the past is no more, and my prospect of futurity is dark and doubtful." Hobbes said, as the last hour approached, "If I had the whole world to dispose of, I would give it to live one day." "Oh!" cried the Duke of Buckingham, as he was closing a life devoted to folly and sin, "what a prodigal have I been of the most valuable of all possessions, time! I have squandered it away with the persuasion that it was lasting; and now, when a few days would be worth a hecatomb of worlds, I cannot flatter myself with the prospect of half a dozen hours."

You see from these examples what are the impressions of dy-

ing men, whether good or bad, respecting the brevity of life, and the worth of time. One sentiment is then felt by all,—life is very short, and time is of infinite value.

2. Another confession which is wont to he made by dying men is, that there is nothing in this world that can satisfy the wants of the immortal soul. This is a lesson which men in general are extremely slow to learn. Though they are continually taught by the Word and the Providence of God, that all things earthly are but for a moment, and perish in the using, they still pursue them as their supreme good, and vainly flatter themselves that when this plan is accomplished, and that object attained, they shall be satisfied; they shall be happy. This is the delusion of the young, the middle-aged, and the aged; and it is the mainspring of that restless activity and ambition, and aspiring after the world, which we witness around us. All wish to be happy, and all expect to be happy in the possession of worldly good.

But in the dying hour this is discovered to be a most fatal mistake, and men look back with amazement upon the folly and madness with which they pursued the world, and looked to its possessions for a satisfying portion. As they stand upon the verge of time, and extend their view to the boundless eternity that stretches before them, the world sinks into utter insignificance, and they wonder how they ever could have been so enamored of its glittering toys, and how the living can be so deluded as to chase its fleeting vanities in the expectation of deriving from them a satisfying good. When Salmasius, one of the greatest scholars of his time, drew near to death, he exclaimed bitterly against himself,—"Oh, I have lost a world of time; time, the most precious thing on the earth, whereof if I had but one year more, it should be spent in David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles. Oh, mind the world less and God more!" Grotius possessed the finest genius ever recorded of a youth in the learned world, and rose to an eminence in literature and science which drew upon him the admiration of all Europe; yet, after all his attainments and high reputation, he was constrained at last to cry out,—"Ah, I have consumed my life in a laborious doing of nothing! I would give all my learning and honor for the plain integrity of John Urick,"—a poor man of eminent piety. John Mason, on his death-bed, said,—"I have lived to see five princes, and have been privy counsellor to four of them; I have seen the most important things in foreign parts, and have been present at most state transactions for thirty years together; and I have learned, after so many years' experience, that seriousness is the greatest wisdom, temperance the best physic, and a good conscience the best estate. And were I to live again, I would change the whole life I have lived

in the palace for an hour's enjoyment of God in the chapel." Philip, the third king of Spain, when he drew near the end of his days, expressed his deep regret for a worldly and careless life in these emphatic words,—"Ah, how happy it would have been for me, had I spent these twenty-three years I have held my kingdom in retirement!" "Good God!" exclaimed a dying nobleman, "how have I employed myself! In what delirium has my life been passed! What have I been doing while the sun in its race and the stars in their courses have lent their beams, perhaps, only to light me to perdition! I have pursued shadows, and entertained myself with dreams. I have been treasuring up dust, and sporting myself with the wind. I might have grazed with the beasts of the field, or sung with the winged inhabitants of the woods, to much better purpose than any for which I have lived."

Examples of this kind might be multiplied to almost any extent, but enough have been cited to show how men regard the riches and honors of the world when they find themselves drawing near to a dying hour, and are called to look into eternity.

3. When men are laid upon a dying bed, they are wont to feel and to acknowledge the utter insufficiency of a mere moral life to prepare them to appear in the presence of God. Many there are who trust to such a life as their only ground of hope for eternity. They do not, perhaps, believe in the reality of a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit, or at least they do not feel the need of such a change in themselves. They mean to lead a correct moral life, to be honest in their dealings, and kind in their treatment of their fellow-men, and this, they imagine, will avail to secure the approbation of their final Judge. They have no just sense of sin, nor of their need of pardon through the blood of Christ, but trust all to a moral life. There is no more common delusion than this, and it is a delusion which vanishes at the approach of death, and leaves the soul trembling in prospect of going to appear before God. The actions of life then appear in a far different light from what they do in the days of health and thoughtlessness. Many things which are indulged, without the slightest apprehension of their being wrong, are then seen to be sins deeply offensive to God, and dangerous to the soul. The law is seen to be unspeakably more strict and holy, sin to be a much greater evil, and the trial before the judgment seat of Christ far more dreadful. What the sinner needs in the dying hour, is something to take away the sting of death; something to sustain his spirit as he passes into the dark valley, and to assure him of the forgiveness and favor of that Almighty Being before whom he is about to appear. But this the fairest morality is utterly in-

sufficient to do. It meets not the exigencies of the sinner's case. It is neither obedience to the law, nor to the gospel, neither love to God, nor faith in Christ. It is in its loveliest form only the cobweb covering of a fair exterior, and wrapped only in this covering, the soul shudders at the thought of death, and falls back in dismay at the sight of the great tribune.

The Apostle enjoyed great peace in the near prospect of death; but it was derived not from a moral life, but from faith in Christ, from evidence felt within that he had a personal interest in the great salvation, and was clothed in His righteousness who had loved him and given himself to die for him. This is the only sure ground of peace in the hour of death. Every other is then found to be insufficient, and trusted in, ends in destruction. It is not giving up the breath, said the nobleman before referred to, it is not being for ever insensible, that is the thought at which I shrink; it is the terrible hereafter, the something beyond the grave, at which I recoil. Those great realities which in the hours of mirth and vanity I have treated as phantoms, as the idle dreams of superstitious beings, these start forth and dare me now in their most terrible demonstrations. O, my friends, exclaimed the pious Janeway, we little think what Christ is worth on a death-bed. I would not now for a world, nay, for millions of worlds, be without Christ and pardon. God might justly condemn me, said Richard Baxter, for the best deeds I ever did, and all my hopes are from the free mercy of God in Christ.

Said the meek and learned Hooker, as he approached his end, Though I have by his grace loved God in my youth and feared him in my age, and labored to have a conscience void of offence to him and to all men, yet, if thou, O Lord, be extreme to mark what I have done amiss, who can abide it? And, therefore, where I have failed show mercy to me, for I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness, for His merits who died to purchase pardon for penitent sinners. Such too were the feelings of our own venerated Hooker* in his dying hour. To a friend who said to him, Sir, you are going to receive the reward of your labors, he replied—Brother, I am going to receive mercy. And not to mention other examples under this head, let me refer to the case of Dr. Johnson. He was a moral man; but his morality could not soften the terrors of a death-bed, nor give him the least peace in prospect of meeting his Judge. When a friend, to calm his agitated mind, referred him to his correct morals and useful life for topics of consolation, he put them away as nothing worth, and in bitterness

* First pastor of the First Church in Hartford,—died 1647.

of soul exclaimed, Shall I, who have been a teacher of others, be myself cast away? This great man had not then fled for refuge to the blood of atonement, as he afterward did; and therefore, notwithstanding his moral and useful life, he was afraid to die, and all beyond the grave looked dark and gloomy to him. And so must it look to all who come to the dying hour with no better preparation than is furnished in a moral life.

4. Men, at the hour of death, are constrained to acknowledge the folly and guilt of an irreligious life, and the supreme importance of a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever apologies are made in the days of health and prosperity for the neglect of religion, those apologies are found utterly worthless on a death-bed, and are renounced as vain and delusive. All excuses vanish in the presence of the king of terrors, and the sinner looks back with self-reproach and astonishment upon the presumption and folly which led him to disregard God, and neglect the concerns of his eternity. Religion is then felt to be indeed the one thing needful, and the whole earth too poor to be given in exchange for the soul. I have attended many death-beds in the course of my ministry, but I recollect no instance where reason was in exercise, in which this acknowledgement was not ready to be made. All are then ready to exclaim,—O that I had been wise, that I had understood and considered my latter end. And even Christians, as much as they love and prize religion in life, feel, when they come to die, that their highest and best views of its importance were far below the reality. They see, then, that it is the only true wisdom to live for God and eternity, and they are amazed to think that they have lived at so poor a rate, and have done so little for the honor of Christ and the advancement of his cause on earth. However men may differ respecting the value and importance of religion in health, there is but one opinion on the subject when they come to lie upon the bed of death. The great question which then absorbs all others, and presses with overwhelming weight on the soul, is: Have I a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have I been born of the Spirit? Am I pardoned through the blood of atonement, and prepared to appear before my Judge in peace? The world, with all its pomp, pleasures, and interests, then appears infinitely too light to engage a single thought in comparison with the great question,—Am I a Christian, and may I hope on good ground to enter into the joy of my Lord on leaving this earthly abode? None find peace and hope in that hour, but those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel. The world retires then, and leaves its wretched votaries in poverty and despair. But heaven comes near to sustain and comfort the faithful servants of God; and they feel that an interest

in Christ is of more value than a thousand worlds like this. Look at Enoch walking with God, and through faith was exempted from death, and was not for God took him: at David comforting himself in the close of life in the assurance that God had made an everlasting covenant with him, ordered in all things and sure: at Paul joyfully declaring in the near view of death, "I know in whom I have believed:" at the dying missionary, Ziegenbalger, exclaiming, "Washed from my sins in the blood of Christ, and clothed with his righteousness, I shall enter into his eternal kingdom:" at Swartz sweetly singing his soul away to everlasting bliss: at Baxter, saying, amid the sinkings of nature, "I am almost well:" at Owen, lifting up his eyes and his hands as if in a kind of rapture, and exclaiming to a friend, "O, brother, the long looked-for day has come at last, in which I shall see the glory of Christ in another manner than I have ever yet done:" at Edwards, comforting his family, as they stood around his dying bed, with the memorable words, "Trust in God, and you have nothing to fear:" at Martyn, in the solitudes of Persia, writing thus a few days before his death, "I sat alone, and thought with sweet comfort and peace of God, in solitude my company, my friend, and comforter:" at Dwight, exclaiming, when the seventeenth chapter of John was read to him, "O, what triumphant truths:" at Evarts, shouting "Glory! Jesus reigns!" as he closed his eyes on death: at Payson, uttering the language of assurance, as he grappled with the last enemy, "The battle is fought! the battle is fought! and the victory is won forever!" In a word, look at the great cloud of witnesses, who, in the faith of Jesus, have triumphed over death and the grave, and peacefully closed their eyes on the world in a joyful hope of opening them in another and a better, and you will learn in what estimation religion is held, when the scenes of earth are retiring, and those of eternity are opening upon the vision of dying men.

When men are laid upon the bed of death and know that they must go hence to be seen here no more, they always feel that it is indeed a solemn thing to die and pass into eternity. If there be exceptions, they are very rare, and occur only in cases of extreme skepticism, or of profound stupidity. Hume could amuse himself with playing chess when death was at the door; and Rousseau could lightly talk of giving back to God his soul as pure as when it came from his hand. But conduct like this is the extreme of infatuation, and can be regarded in no other light than as a part of the accursedness of those who are reprobate of God. Think of it as we may, while the event is viewed as future and distant, we shall all find, when the last hour comes, that it is indeed a serious matter to die. To close all our connection with this world; to lie down

from which we shall never rise up; to have our bodies turned to dust, and our souls go into the world of spirits to appear before God, and pass the all-decisive trial, and enter upon a state of being that is never to change,—these are events which may well make mortals tremble and shrink back at their approach. So the dying nobleman felt, whom I have more than once referred to, when he said,—a condemned wretch may, with as good a grace, go dancing to his execution, as the greatest part of mankind go on with such a thoughtless gayety to their graves. A future state, said the Duke of Buckingham, dying in despair, may well strike terror into a man who has not acted well in life; and he must have an uncommon share of courage indeed who does not shrink at the presence of God. And when Lord Chesterfield, skeptic and devotee of pleasure as he was, was compelled to acknowledge, as the closing scene drew on,—When one does see death near, let the best or the worst people say what they please, it is a serious consideration. Remorse for the past, exclaimed the dying Altamont, throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future strikes them back on the past. I turn and turn, and find no ray. Death is knocking at my doors; in a few hours more I shall draw my last gasp; and then the judgment, the tremendous judgment! How shall I appear, all unprepared as I am, before the all-knowing and omnipotent God? O eternity, eternity, cried the distracted Newport, as he lay upon his death-bed, contemplating the solemn scenes before him, who can paraphrase on the words for ever and ever?

Such are the confessions that are wont to be made by dying men; such the feelings and thoughts that crowd upon the mind as the last hour approaches. And in view of them we may remark,—

1. They are founded in truth; there is just cause for them. It is *true* that life is short, and that time is of infinite value. It is *true* that this world contains nothing which can satisfy the wants of the immortal mind. It is *true* that a moral life is utterly insufficient as a preparation for death and the judgment. It is *true* that an irreligious life is a life of extreme folly and presumption, and that a saving interest in Christ is a matter of supreme importance to every living man. It is *true* that it is a solemn thing to die and go into eternity, to appear before a holy God. And the wonder is, not that dying men should feel these things to be true, and be deeply affected by them, but that living men should treat them with indifference, and go through the world contradicting the feelings and views which are sure to crowd upon them with overwhelming interest in the day of death. Here is just matter of astonishment; and of all the strange things that are witnessed in the conduct of our fallen

race, this is the strangest, that men should walk in the midst of graves, convey their own friends and acquaintances to the house of silence, and meet every day and in every path of life with the most solemn monitions of their own approaching end, and still live as though they were never to die, and shut their eyes on scenes which must soon burst upon them in all the weight and solemnity of a present eternity. I remark,—

2. That many of my hearers will, in a short time, view this subject in a very different light from that in which they now contemplate it. Some of you are young, and in the buoyant feelings of youth and health scarcely think it possible that you may soon be called to death and the judgment. Some of you are profoundly careless of your immortal well-being, and are so enamored of the things of the world that you seldom think of your latter end, or of what you need to prepare you to die. Others of you are perhaps skeptical as to the reality of a change of heart to fit you for the closing scene, and are trusting to a moral life as a foundation of hope in the coming day of trial; others of you still, who bear the Christian name, are probably deceived as to the ground of your hope, or are living in a state of backsliding from God, awfully unprepared for his summons to leave the world. To all such the Son of Man is likely to come in an hour they think not of; and when he comes, they will be thrown into fearful consternation, and the dreams with which they are now deluded will vanish forever. You have heard what is the testimony of dying men on some points of infinite moment to yourselves, but which you at present regard with little feeling, and treat with great neglect. But the time is not distant when you shall join your testimony with those that have gone before you into the invisible world; when the scene of life shall close, and your eternal state commence. And whatever be your present views and feelings, it is not in the least doubtful what they will be then. Should you die in the exercise of your reason, you will look back with amazement on your present course of life, and wonder how you could be so infatuated as to neglect God and your souls, and make no preparation for the solemn scenes of a dying hour. Those of you who are now young will then learn that you are not too young to die; and those of you who are living securely in sin, that it is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; and those of you who are trusting to a moral life, that you are trusting to a foundation of sand; and those of you who are cold and formal in religion, that in such a state of mind you are sadly unprepared to die, and render up your account unto God. Death will bring your hearts and lives to a new and severe test, and draw from all of you the confession, that to fear God and keep his commandments is the first duty and the highest wisdom and happiness of every living man. I remark,—

3. It is the part of true wisdom to cherish those views and feelings now, which we know we shall regard as of supreme importance when we come to die. Why should any spend life in treasuring materials for sorrow, disappointment, and despair in the dying hour? Why should any gather food for the worm that never dies, or fuel for the fire that is never quenched? If, as we draw near to death, we shall regard life as very short, and time as infinitely valuable, let us regard them so now, and be quickened to do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do. If we shall then feel that this world is a poor thing, considered as a portion for the soul, let us view it in that light now, and choose God as our portion, and heaven as our home. If a hope of acceptance with God, built on a mere moral life, will then perish as a spider's web and leave us in despair, let us renounce that vain confidence now, and build our hope on that sure corner-stone which God has laid in Zion, and which will never disappoint us. If an impenitent, irreligious life will then appear to us the greatest folly, and a saving interest in Christ the one thing needful, let us not pursue such a life any longer, but close at once with the Saviour, and follow him as our Lord and Master unto the end of our days. And if when the end comes we shall find it indeed a solemn thing to die and go into eternity to appear before God, let us regard it so now, and make that preparation which will sustain us in the last conflict, and give us peace in the day of final decision.

Look forward, then, immortal man, and endeavor to realize what will be your feelings and views in the dying hour, and if you would be wise, begin without delay to cherish those sentiments and pursue that course of life which you will then wish you had; which will save you from remorse and self-reproach and bitter despair in the great day of the Lord.

"Nothing," surely, "is worth a thought beneath, but how we may escape that death that never, never dies; how make our own election sure, and when we fail on earth, secure a mansion in the skies."

4. The confessions of dying men are of no avail, only as they indicate the folly of sin and the value of religion. They do not change the character—they do not fit the soul for death or for heaven. Of the many instances mentioned in this discourse of wicked men being awakened at the close of life to some just view of their character and state, there is not one in which there is any evidence that they repented and embraced the salvation of the Gospel. Their groans, like those of the damned, come up to proclaim the miseries of sin, and to warn the living to avoid their wretched end. It is not the remorse and fear of a dying hour; it is not the shudderings of guilt, and the confusions and tears which are wrung from sinners when they find

they can enjoy the world no longer, but must go and give an account of themselves unto God, that can avail to change the heart and prepare the soul for the inheritance of the saints in light. The strong bands of sin are not so dissolved, nor is it so that the love of God and Christ is inspired in the bosom, and meetness acquired for a place among the redeemed in heaven. No, dear hearer; if you put off religion till you come to a death-bed, you will probably be left to put it off forever. You will not find it so easy as you suppose to cast off the habits of sin, to believe in Christ, and make your peace with God. You may be awakened to see your sin and misery; you may bewail the stupidity and folly of your past life; your misspent time, your abuse of privileges, your neglects of calls and warnings; the terrors of death and the pains of hell may get hold upon you, and you may cry in agony of spirit for help; but God may leave you, as he has other despisers of mercy, awful monuments to warn those who survive you of the danger of trifling with the claims of religion and the high concerns of eternity. Be wise, then, in this your day, to attend to the things which belong to your peace, lest they be hid forever from your eyes. Go learn the value of religion in the peaceful and triumphant death of those that die in the Lord; go learn its value in the remorse and despair of those that die in neglect of Christ and his salvation. Then look to the end of life, and remember that with one or the other of these two classes of persons you are to terminate your mortal career; that with the friends of God, the followers of Jesus, you are to bear your testimony to the value of religion in the joy and hope that will then fill your bosom, or with the enemies of God and the neglecters of the Saviour, you are to bear your testimony to the guilt and misery of an irreligious, prayerless life, in the remorse and fear that will then agitate and corrode the soul. Which, then, will you do?—which does conscience admonish you to do?—which will you wish you had done in the day when you shall bid adieu to the scenes of earth, and go to dwell among the dead? Decide now, and let your life be regulated accordingly. Decide now, and let no day nor hour of the year on which you have just entered find you unprepared to meet the summons, should it come, that is to call you out of time into eternity. Hear the voices of those who, during the year past, departed from this congregation into the world of spirits—eleven in all, ten of whom were members of the church, and died, I trust, in good hope of eternal life. Would you die like them, and have your last end like theirs? Then, as you stand upon the threshold of this new year, with its unknown events before you, retreat awhile from the snares and delusions of the [redacted] your eyes upon the scenes of time, upon [redacted]

be closed forever, and converse with the world to come—with death, judgment, and eternity. Go stand upon the shores of that dark, vast ocean you must sail so soon, and listen to the sound of its waves till you are deaf to every sound besides, and then with those solemn scenes around and before you, endeavor, with all earnestness and diligence, to gather about you those resources of faith and piety which you will assuredly need in the day when you shall be called to meet that enemy whom you must conquer, or die forever.

SERMON DXXXIX.

THE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY REV. W. B. SPRAGUE, D. D.,
PASTOR OF SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALBANY, N. Y.

"I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."—PHIL. 4: 13.

THIS is one of those comprehensive declarations which we occasionally meet with in Scripture, and especially in the writings of Paul, in which the whole system of Christianity seems to be compressed into a single sentence. For what is Christianity but a revelation of the all-sufficiency of Christ to meet the impotence of man? Paul, with all his native and acquired intellectual energy, was, as a sinner, the heir of moral death; and even as a saint, he was the heir of an undisputed moral weakness; for we have his own testimony to the fact, that when he "would do good, evil" was "present with" him. Nevertheless, through Christ, he was mighty. In proportion as he was baptised with the Spirit of Christ, there was vigor in his thoughts, there was heroism in his heart, there was nerve in his arm, for the accomplishment of anything, for the endurance of anything to which the honor of his Master called him. And as it was with Paul, so it is with all Christ's followers. In themselves they are compassed about with many infirmities; they are often oppressed with a sense of their own weakness, and yet in Christ they have a tower of strength; they are mighty, through him, even to the pulling down of strongholds.

The inward exercises of the Christian, not less than the doctrines which he believes, bear, in no inconsiderable degree, even to himself, a mysterious character. The proposition contained in our text every Christian knows to be true as a matter of [illegible], and up to a certain point he comprehends it, and is

able to explain it; but beyond that point it is enveloped in deep mystery. The life of the Christian is a hidden life; and we cannot say but that the mysteries which are bound up in it may engage his admiring scrutiny through eternity. Still there is much connected with it that is capable of being explained; and, if I mistake not, an attentive consideration of the passage which I have just read to you, will bring before us the substance of all that has been revealed on this wonderful subject. "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

The Christian's strength—the source from which, and the medium through which, it is communicated—this will form the subject of our discourse.

1. *The Christian's strength.*—Paul expresses it in the phrase, "I can do all things." The expression is limited by the subject to which it relates; for to understand it literally, would be nothing less than to impute to the Apostle the impiety of claiming one of the Divine attributes. He is speaking of the peculiar difficulties and trials to which he was subjected in the cause of Christ, and his meaning is that he is able to meet them successfully, victoriously; he is adequate to anything to which his duty, as a follower and an ambassador of Christ, might call him. And in its application to Christians in general, it is to be understood as implying their ability to obey Christ's commands in all things; their resolution not to yield to any obstacle which they may find in their path, provided they are sure it is the path which the Master has marked out for them.

1. More particularly, I remark that the Christian is mighty to *labor*. It is at once the sin and the shame of a large part of the world, that they fritter away their lives in indolent inaction; and of a still larger part of it, that, though they exercise their faculties vigorously, it is for mere worldly objects. They labor hard enough for the meat that perisheth, but not at all for that which endureth to everlasting life. But the true Christian differs widely from both these classes;—from the former, as he is awake to earnest and diligent effort; from the latter, as his efforts are directed to beneficent and spiritual ends. Let him occupy whatever part of the great field he may, he will find enough to do, and if he have the Christian spirit, he will be in earnest to do it. See how inventive he is in devising plans for sustaining the great interests of truth and piety; for sending abroad the glorious Gospel; for bringing all within his reach under the benign influence of a pure Christianity! See how ready he is to keep on laboring in spite of difficulties; how he takes advantage of everything that can, in any way, be rendered tributary to his work; how he even sometimes presses into his cause the most adverse circumstances, causing that to

become the minister of good which was designed to be the minister of evil. I think I hear some one ask, "Where are we to look for such Christians as these?"—and I know it is a cutting question; I know what multitudes there are who bear the Christian name, who have no better character than that of drones in the church; and I know, too, how wretchedly most of us fall short of our Christian vows and obligations; but I also know that there are Christians, and not a few, to whom we may point triumphantly for an illustration of our position; men and women, whose desire to live in the world is identified with their desire to labor for Christ. A nobler example there never was, than the man from whom came the declaration in our text. Every faculty of his great mind was kept in intense exercise; his ruling passion was to honor Christ as a follower, in proportion as he had dishonored him as a persecutor. In the act of his conversion, he breathed forth the prayer, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and the whole record of his subsequent life shows the sincerity of that prayer; for it shows him always engaged about his Master's business. Do you say that the world has never seen but one Paul; that his conversion was an extraordinary conversion, and his character an extraordinary character, and that therefore he is not to be taken as a sample of what Christianity, acting by its more ordinary influences, can accomplish? Look, then, at Brainard, with his heart beating so high for the salvation of the poor Indians, that neither the persuasion of his friends, nor his own manifest approach to the grave, could keep him out of the wilderness; labor he would, labor he did, till his physical energies were so nearly gone, that he felt that nothing remained for him but to go away and die. Look at Henry Martyn, nothing wearied by the keen and sagacious opposition of his enemies; nothing discouraged by finding barrenness where he had hoped for a harvest; nothing intimidated by the progress of a disease which was gradually wearing out his constitution, he kept on laboring to the extent of his ability, till death took him away to occupy a more glorious field. Do you say that even these are extraordinary cases, and that I am still lingering among the greatest names that adorn the Christian record? Then let me ask you to look at the lives of most of our modern missionaries; notice the self-denial and heroic spirit that breathes in their communications; see how evident it is that they do not count even their lives dear to them; see them adventuring upon great and hazardous enterprises, evincing an intrepidity that no obstacle is powerful enough to overcome; and finally see them holding on in their course of diligent and earnest effort, till they go to render up their account with joy. Nay, you need not look across the ocean to find these glorious examples—you may find persons, I doubt

not, of both sexes, in your own community, who have learned the secret of not living to themselves; who, without neglecting their worldly business, find no little time to give to the spiritual interests of their fellow-creatures; and some who make it a part of the economy of their life to go around at regular intervals among the habitations of wretchedness, as ministers of peace and consolation. No, brethren, notwithstanding the general apathy that prevails in the church, and the multitude of cases in which its members openly and flagrantly dishonor a Christian profession, I have no fear of not being able to illustrate my position, if I should be called to do it, by living examples. There are in the bosom of the church now, even now, when the love of many waxes cold, some at least, who are not weary of well-doing.

2. The Christian is mighty to *resist*. The spiritual life, so long as the natural life lasts, is an uninterrupted scene of conflict. The Christian would fain be at peace; but his enemies will not let him alone. He may be in the world engaged in his lawful business; he may be at home in the bosom of domestic quiet and comfort; he may be in the church a devout and earnest worshipper; he may be in the closet, where no eye sees him but that of his Father in Heaven; and yet in any or all of these conditions he is accessible by his spiritual foes. The world is one of these foes, in every attractive form into which it can throw itself: the prince of the power of the air is another; and he associates with himself we know not how many kindred agents: and last, though not least, that set of enemies which he harbors in his own bosom, his own inward corruptions, sometimes act upon his comfort with most terrible effect. But be his enemies what they may, and be they where they may, the true Christian, with his armor on, dares to encounter them. With the sword of the Spirit, with the breastplate of righteousness, with the guide of truth, with the helmet of salvation, he enters the conflict with confidence, and he retires from it with triumph. I do not say that he always triumphs; but it is his own fault if he does not; and in general the life of the true Christian is made up, in a great measure, of a succession of victorious conflicts.

3. The Christian is mighty to *endure*. What else is the whole record of Christian martyrdom, but a record of glorious triumphs in connection with the dying agony? See that man dressed for a conflict with the fire. The terrible arrangement for the last scene is now fully made. The stake to which he is to be bound, the faggots which are to take hold of his flesh, and the fire which is to set them at their work, are all in his view. And now he is asked for the last time, whether he is willing to abjure Christ; and he answers, as if he spoke from the depths of a lion's heart, "No," and that "No," is gratefully responded

to by a voice from the crowd, the voice of one who stands ready to die with him, the voice of his own beloved wife, bidding him be courageous, and play the man in his martyrdom. And there he stands, calmly, triumphantly, perhaps even praising God in the fire; and there *she* stands, with her eyes lifted to Heaven, and suffused with tears of thankfulness, that her husband is enabled to die so glorious a death.

And this is only a specimen of a multitude of cases that show what strength there is in the heart of a martyr. But we need not go to the history of martyrs to illustrate our position: in the more ordinary scenes of suffering we are often surprised by an exhibition of fortitude that would seem adequate to the endurance of anything. I have seen the naturally timid female, so courageous in the passage through the dark valley, that I have said to myself: "There is a spirit of noble daring there that death in any form is too feeble to vanquish; that heart would keep on beating courageously even amidst the tortures of the rack." I have seen a mother dying with a cluster of little children at her bedside; and their father was there too in the wretchedness of a vagabond and a sot: and her eyes had not seen the light for many years before the darkness of death came over her; and yet her dying hour was like an hour of jubilee; she lay upon that bed of straw, and clasped her withered hands, and moved her sightless eyeballs, and the last expressions that escaped her lips were expressions of thankfulness, of triumph, of transport. You must keep away from such scenes as these if you would doubt the Christian's power to endure; but scenes at least similar to these in their general character are occurring everywhere: and each of them is a witness to the truth which I am endeavoring to present to you.

II. Thus much may suffice to illustrate the Christian's strength; we will now, secondly, contemplate the *source* from which, and the *medium* through which, it is communicated. The apostle, in our text, refers it immediately to Christ—"I can do all things through *Christ*, which strengtheneth me."

Christ is here, no doubt, to be contemplated in the character of mediator. In this character he has all power in heaven and on earth committed to him. Hereby he is qualified to be the head of the church, and to guard all its interests, to manage all its concerns, to supply all its wants. Hereby especially he becomes, not only to the church at large, but to every individual member, the fountain of all strength. It is through the working of his mighty power that each becomes a subject of his kingdom on earth, and ultimately reaches such a spiritual stature as to be admitted to his kingdom in heaven. The administering of strength to the saints, then, belongs peculiarly to the Saviour: it is part of the reward which crowns his mediatorial sufferings. I remark, then,

1. In the first place, that Christianity, by which I here mean the system of truth revealed in the Gospel, appeals to our sense of obligation by the authority which it claims. If an individual should require any service at your hands, which you knew he had no authority to require, you would of course deny his right, and would feel no obligation to yield to the requirement: but if the command, besides being reasonable in itself, should come to you clothed with a legitimate authority; if, for instance, it should be a command from a parent to a child, or from a magistrate to a subject, you could not fail to recognize the obligation to obey; and while this sense of obligation would embarrass you in the purpose to disobey, the spirit of obedience would as certainly find in it an important auxiliary. Let a man feel that what he is about to do is right, that it is in full accordance with his inmost convictions of duty, and it will nerve him with a resolution and energy which he could scarcely look for under other influences. Now remember that Christianity claims a Divine authority—all that *it* commands, *God* commands—the God who is our Creator and Preserver and sovereign Proprietor, and whom therefore we are bound to obey by the strongest possible obligations. In doing what he requires of us, we know, beyond a peradventure, that we are acting right; that we are acting in accordance with the dignity of our nature; acting in a manner that will abide the strictest inward test, either now or in any future period of our existence. And who needs be told that in the consciousness of being governed by such high motives, must be bound up the elements of mighty power? What made Daniel so fearless to encounter the lions' den? What made the three young men so fearless to be cast into the furnace? What made the martyrs so fearless when they sung upon the rack? What makes many a man at this day so undaunted, so persevering, in following the Master through evil report? Ah, the secret of it all is, the inward consciousness that they are doing right; the voice from within, witnessing for them that that dark path, as the case may be, that bloody path, is the path of God's commandments.

2. Christianity appeals to our fears by the terrors which it announces. Fear is one of the most active of all the passions; it was designed by the Creater to put us on our guard against evil; and no small part of our safety in the present world depends upon its operation. Of the powerful influence which this passion exerts, there are practical illustrations passing before our eyes every day. Yonder is an individual who is afraid of losing his property. See how intensely and continually it keeps his faculties in operation; how readily he deprives himself of rest, and even of food, in order to neutralize the influences which are at work to render him a poor man. Yonder

is another who is in danger of losing his good name: notice the watchfulness, the earnestness, the deep anxiety with which he labors to defend himself against either the just or the unjust imputations that are made upon him. Yonder is another who has committed some desperate deed, for which he knows that he is liable to extreme punishment: how the fear of being brought to justice tortures him by day and by night—how it keeps him upon the alert to observe everything that would seem to indicate the probability of detection—how it reconciles him to making his bed in the bosom of the forest, and carries him through the darkness of the night, as if on the wings of the wind, into far distant regions! And if fear operates so powerfully in respect to these lesser evils, what must be its operation in respect to those greater evils, which the Bible assures us are to constitute the final portion of the ungodly? All these evils are concentrated in one—the loss of the soul: but what untold misery, what depth of anguish and wailing, the loss of the soul involves, it must be left to the ages of eternity to reveal. But you will say, perhaps, that this consideration can exert no influence upon the Christian, inasmuch as he, in virtue of *being* a true Christian, is beyond the reach of these tremendous evils. But is he certain that he really sustains the character? Is it not true in respect to the great mass, even of those whose religious character shines the brightest, that they never have that full assurance of hope that casts out all fear; while not a few are habitually in doubt concerning the evidences of their discipleship? Did not even Paul himself fear lest, after all his labors and sufferings in the cause of Christ, he should prove a cast-away; and has he not exhorted Christians to fear lest a promise being left of entering into rest, they should seem to come short of it? If then the professed followers of Christ have just reason to doubt whether theirs be the genuine Christian experience, they have the same reason to fear lest they should find tribulation and anguish awaiting them in the next world. Must not the reflection that this is even possible, stimulate them to the highest efforts of which they are capable, in order to avoid it? Whose ear does not tingle, whose heart does not tremble, at that terrible declaration, "Who can inhabit everlasting burnings!"

3. Christianity appeals to our hopes by the rewards which it proposes. Is not the hope of reward the spring of a large part of the labor which men undergo in the present life? What makes that poor man so patient and steady at his daily work? It is the hope of being able to return home with bread for his wife and children. What makes that student so intensely occupied with his books; even wasting his physical energies, and preparing for himself a premature grave, because he *will* not relax from intellectual toil? It is the hope of acquiring large

stores of knowledge, and of having a bright name in the walks of literature and science. What makes that politician so anxious, and busy, and patriotic, and complaisant to everybody, in the prospect of an election? Why it is that he hopes a good use will be made at the polls of his own name; and he thinks how gracefully he shall wear those laurels, if they can only be obtained. But all that the mere man of the world can hope for, compared with the object of the Christian's hopes, fades into insignificance. The peace, and the joy, and the triumph, which the Christian has a right to anticipate, in life and in death, were worthy to be an object of most diligent seeking; but the glory that is beyond the veil, some beams of which now and then fall upon the eye of a vigorous faith; the glorified faculties, and the glorified employments, and the glorified society, and the glorified wisdom—all, all that is included in the idea of heaven—oh! who can measure the value of such an object of pursuit as this? And yet nothing less than this is embraced by the Christian's hope. And shall the baubles of earth set the men of the world upon a course of the most laborious effort, and do you suppose that the substantial and immortal glories of heaven shall not waken up the inmost energies of the Christian's soul? Believe me, there is that in the heavenly portion that will not suffer the heart that longs for it to beat sluggishly—there must be, there will be, active and earnest effort awakened in view of it; and where no such effort is actually awakened, we need no higher evidence that the heart has never been quickened to heavenly impulses.

4. Christianity appeals to our confidence by the aids which it proffers. If an individual has projected a great enterprise that requires a vast amount of earnest thought and laborious effort, and yet he finds no one coming to his aid for the prosecution of it, but feels that he must address himself to it single-handed, depending entirely upon his own resources, he is very likely to be deterred from entering upon it at all; or, even if he does enter upon it, he will probably soon become discouraged and abandon it altogether. But if, on the other hand, he finds himself surrounded by all the necessary aids for the prosecution of his work, he sets himself to it with zeal and alacrity; and the consciousness that all the means which he requires to carry it forward are at hand, nerves his arm with unwonted vigor, and conveys not only to himself but to others a sure pledge of success. Now, how is it with the Christian? Is he called to perform a work, without the adequate means being provided for him? Let the ordinances and institutions of Christianity answer. What is going forward here at this hour? Why you are listening to that very truth in which the power of God unto salvation resides; you are mingling your

prayers and praises before the throne of mercy; you are doing that which is eminently fitted to increase your spiritual strength; and when you return to your dwellings, you will find the Bible there, which you can read and study for yourself: there, too, you may find the closet of prayer, where the gentlest whisper, or even the silent outgoings of the soul, are sure to find a domestic altar, from which a grateful offering ascends to Heaven, morning and evening: and when you go out into the world, you meet with others who are bound heavenward, with whom you can take sweet counsel, and who are glad to greet you as fellow-helpers unto the kingdom of God. In short, leaving out of view the special influences of God's Spirit, which are pledged to the Christian, you have all the external aids in the religious life that you could desire; and they are present with you always, so that you can use them at your pleasure. Can you contemplate these gracious assistances, Christian, without feeling strong? In the hour of temptation, in the hour of sorrow, in the hour when arduous duties press, what say you of the encouragement that you gather from looking to the closet, to the sanctuary, to the communion table, to all the means of grace, and reflecting that God has ordained them for the very purpose of insuring to you help, victory, salvation?

5. Christianity appeals to our gratitude by the beneficence which it exhibits. None but the frozen, the adamantine heart can be insensible to the bestowment of great favors. Who is that that has just gone away from your door pronouncing your name gratefully and with tears? It is a poor woman, to whom you have given a piece of bread to carry home to her half-starved children. Who is that individual whom perhaps you never saw before, who is pressing up to you with the face of a stranger and the heart of a friend, and who is struggling against his own emotions as he attempts to speak to you? It is one whom your charity rescued from the deepest degradation, and surrounded with advantages for intellectual and moral culture, which, by being faithfully improved, have made him a man—a useful man—perhaps even a great man. And who is that son of Africa, upon whose face sunbeams are playing while tears are streaming, as he falls at your feet and acts out feelings which his tongue cannot express? Why he is a man whom you have redeemed from slavery; and as you could not see him separated from his wife and children, you have redeemed them also; and he has come himself, and brought them along with him, to stand before you as the monuments of your generous interposition. And what is there, or rather what is there not, to awaken this same principle in the heart of the true believer toward his heavenly Benefactor? Christian, *thou* wast that slave;

and yet not *that* slave, but one whose bondage was infinitely more degrading and terrible. Thou wast a slave to thine evil passions; a slave to the false maxims of the world; a slave to the very prince of darkness; and yet thou wast willing to remain in slavery, although it must have its issue in an eternal death. God so loved thee that he gave his Son to redeem thee; and that redemption has involved the death of the cross; and now, instead of being a slave, thou art one of God's freemen; thou art walking at liberty even in this vale of tears; and the heavens will open soon to announce to thee that thy redemption is complete. Here, Christian, lies the grand secret of your strength. It is the love of Christ that constrains you. You look to the cross, and you say, "What do I not owe, what shall I not owe forever, to that all-gracious, all-suffering, Benefactor?" Your heart beats to loftier purposes, and your hands are strung with fresh vigor. I wonder not now at the triumph of martyrs. The love of Jesus is stronger than the consuming fire. That crucified, enthroned Saviour is the glorious object upon which their eye fastens; a sense of the blessings of his redemption overwhelms their grateful spirits, and their tongues move in rapture to his praise so long as they can move at all. Oh, they were never so strong as in the act of dying! and the reason is, that they never before had such a sense of what it was for their Redeemer to die for them.

6. And lastly: Christianity appeals to our holy emulation by the examples which it records. It results from the constitution of our nature, that examples, either good or bad, exert a prodigious influence; and no small part of what men do, or neglect to do, is in consequence of the examples with which they are brought in contact. Hence parents who look well to the interests of their children, endeavor, as far as possible, to surround them with good examples; and hence, too, our gracious Master has surrounded us, his weak and too often wayward followers, with many illustrious models of Christian character, that they may have their influence in helping us forward in our religious course. These examples show us in the most impressive manner what it is to which we are to aspire: they give us the practical embodiment of the great principles of our faith, and then they assure us that a commanding spiritual stature is attainable, inasmuch as it has already been attained. And finally, they seem to call upon us, perhaps from their daily walks of labor, perhaps from the silence of their graves, or the glory of their thrones, to rise up continually to a more vigorous tone of spiritual action. There are eminent saints now on earth, some no doubt within the range of your daily observation, whose example appeals to you with mighty power as often as you contemplate it. There is a yet greater

multitude in heaven: there are Abraham and Moses, and Isaiah and Paul—all the prophets and all the apostles, and a multitude who have gone since their day, some from the rack and the stake—all from a world of sorrow—all in a chariot of glory. All these are your examples, Christian; but I am not yet at the end; for above all and over all, is the incarnate Son of God himself, part of whose errand into the world was, to set us an example, that we should walk in his steps. And can we keep these examples in our eye; can we look around us upon the devoted on earth, or look above us to the glorified in heaven, without earnest desires and diligent efforts to become like them? Hear what encouraging words the great apostle hath spoken—"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Now, just review the ground we have gone over, looking at the several points as they have been successively developed, and see whether it is not as clear as the light, that Christianity is the depository of an all-quickening energy. It appeals to our sense of obligation by the authority which it claims. It appeals to our fears by the terrors which it announces. It appeals to our hopes by the rewards which it proposes. It appeals to our confidence by the aids which it proffers. It appeals to our gratitude by the beneficence which it exhibits. It appeals to our holy emulation by the examples which it records. Is it to be wondered at, then, that it accomplishes such mighty results? Does not the Christian stand acquitted of arrogance, when he exclaims with the great apostle, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me?"

How glorious is the triumph which arises out of our subject to true Christianity! The test by which Christianity offers to be tried, is the power that dwells in it. You have seen what it can accomplish, and what it can resist, and what it can endure; and you have seen, moreover, that it accomplishes nothing, resists nothing, endures nothing without being able to give a substantial reason for it. I will say nothing here of the various forms of Paganism, ancient and modern; for notwithstanding they have often rendered their votaries mighty to suffer, yet it was by means that not only contradict but outrage all the dictates of sober reason; and among ourselves, at least, there are none who will claim for *them* a divine original. But let Deism, or any other false system, be brought to this test, and see whether the

genuine gospel does not cast it into utter darkness. Reigning spirits of error, we challenge you to show us what you have done, that we may thereby know what you are. Show us your long list of martyrs, who have glorified your systems with their expiring breath, and who have felt that those systems were a cordial to their souls while their bodies lay writhing upon the rack. Show us the great multitude of benefactors to the world who have been found in your ranks; especially those who have counted it a privilege to live and even to die for the spiritual interests of their fellow-men. Show us your missionaries, to whom the exile from country, and the separation from friends, and the exposure to a sickly climate, and all the perils among heathen, are accounted as nothing, in comparison with the grand object of causing the wilderness to blossom, and of bringing many sons unto glory. Show us these fruits of your systems, these monuments of their inherent power; bring forth your men of moral might, your noble army of martyrs, or else acknowledge that you are leaning upon a prop that is nothing better than air. Or rather take refuge in the sanctuary of a pure Christianity; and become yourselves not only the depositories but the channels of divine strength; for then you shall get rid of this degrading weakness, and through Christ shall be able to do all things.

I thank the great Apostle for having penned, and the greater Saviour for having dictated, that noble declaration, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" for here is the point at which all the light, and strength, and triumph of the church are centred. When I feel oppressed with a sense of weakness, hither I can come and feel strong. When I am growing timid in the prospect of danger, hither I can come and feel courageous. When I see the waves of adversity, mountain high, fiercely approaching me, let me station myself beneath the cross, and be as quiet as a child. And there too let me stand, and gird myself for a conflict with the last enemy: if the spirit of the cross may but come over me, to death's terrors I will oppose a serene and triumphant smile. Oh, brethren, the cross is but another word for Christianity itself: by its healing, strengthening virtues, may we all be nurtured for immortality!

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 2, Vol. xxv. FEBRUARY, 1851. Whole No. 282.

SERMON DXL.

BY REV. G. N. JUDD, D. D.,

MONTGOMERY, N. Y.

THE CHARACTER AND DEATH OF DAVID.*

"David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."—Acts 13 : 36.

THE essential distinction between the righteous and the wicked,—between those who serve God and those who serve him not—consists in the difference of their governing aims. How widely soever the wicked may differ among themselves, and how much soever some of them may resemble the friends of God, they are all agreed in disregarding his authority and in supreme devotion to their own interests. In native disposition, endowments, education, pursuits, and circumstances, the righteous may greatly differ, but they are all agreed in cheerfully bowing to God's supremacy. They are *not* governed by a regard to their *own* interest or pleasure, but to *his* glory. The influence of those who thus live, when gifted in intellect and elevated in station, is like that of angels, in their visits to our world, commissioned to scatter blessings among its sinful, perishing population. Such was the predominant influence of the patriarch David :—such was that of the venerable servant of God, whose remains are now before us, who bore the name, and the prominent traits of whose character strikingly resembled those of the sweet psalmist and king of Israel. On this occasion, therefore, it cannot be *irrelevant*, and I hope it will not be *unprofitable*, briefly to contemplate the statement in our text, concerning the life and death of David, of whom honorable mention is often made in God's holy oracles.

His character is given in the short but comprehensive

* Funeral Sermon of the late Dr. Porter, of Catskill, N. Y.

phrase, "He served his own generation by the will of God." The exact meaning of the original would be more clearly presented by a slight change in the translation. It may be rendered, "David, when he had in his own generation served the will of God, fell on sleep." The sense of the passage evidently is, that the life of David was habitually governed by a regard to the Divine will. Distinguished as he was for worldly prosperity and renown, neither wealth, nor fame, nor the honors of royalty, constituted the paramount object of his life. His *governing aim* was to do the will of God.

This practical acknowledgment of God's supremacy was made, as it should be in the case of every individual, early in life. How much earlier we know not, but when a mere stripling, employed in feeding his father's flocks, he was a devout worshipper of God, and a diligent student of his works and Word. In the objects of beauty and grandeur by which he was surrounded; in his own mysterious being, and in the glories of the heavens, he delighted to trace the operations of Jehovah's wisdom, benevolence, and power. His contemplation of God's glorious perfections called forth ascriptions of praise, and of his condescending, discriminating love to him, acts of devout thanksgiving. Even in that inexperienced period of life, when the heart is most liable to be inflated with pride by marks of peculiar honor, he was eminently meek and humble. Though anointed the future king of God's chosen people by a prophet sent to perform the act, neither by that honorable designation, nor the victory which he shortly after achieved over the proud and blaspheming champion of Philistia, by which the eyes of an admiring and grateful nation were fixed upon him, does he seem to have been unduly elated. Even *then* he had learned what few do with equal thoroughness in scores of years, that "promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south:" that "God is the judge:" that "he putteth down one and setteth up another." In that dark period of his history which succeded the events just mentioned, when the object of Saul's unmerited and mortal hatred, toward his malignant, persecuting sovereign he exhibited great benevolence and signal magnanimity. In circumstances in which the world would have justified and lauded the act as called for in self-defence, repeatedly might he have taken the life of his royal adversary and placed himself upon the throne; but he committed his cause to God, and waited patiently for Him to redress his wrongs, and place the promised crown upon his head. When invested with the honors of royalty, he used them not as instruments of his own pleasure and aggrandizement, but for the promotion of the happiness of his subjects, and the glory of God. Before his family, his courtiers, and his subjects, he acknowledged his ceaseless dependence upon Jehovah, and his obligations for the blessings of his providence and grace.

In the law of the Lord he meditated day and night, prized it above "fine gold," and accounted it "sweeter also than honey, and the droppings of honey-comb." Upon the public worship of God, he was a regular and delighted attendant. He esteemed a day in the courts of the Lord better than a thousand devoted to the interests of the present world. Before his subjects, and the idolatrous nations around him, he honored Jehovah as the only proper object of religious worship.

After he had gained possession of the city of Jerusalem, enlarged and beautified it, and made it the capital of his kingdom, he ministered to the will of God by bringing to it the ark, the divinely appointed symbol of Jehovah's presence. This act was accompanied by solemn and appropriate services. A sacred ode, composed for the occasion, of rare poetic merit, and rich in elevated, devout, and grateful sentiment, was sung, accompanied by impressive demonstrations of holy joy. He likewise adopted prompt and energetic measures for the regulation of the courses of the priests and musicians, that the sacrifices might be offered according to the law, and God's praises appropriately celebrated in sacred songs. He also formed the purpose of erecting a magnificent temple to the honor of God, in which he designed to place the ark of the covenant, and in whose hallowed courts the most solemn rites of Divine worship might be performed. This pious purpose God accepted, but conferred the honor of building the temple upon Solomon. Notwithstanding David was denied the honor of rearing the sacred edifice which he had planned, he made vast and expensive preparations for its erection, and charged Solomon, his son, to apply them to the purpose for which they had been made.

David's devotion to the service of God, however, did not exhibit itself *merely* in acts of worship and measures to secure the performance of them by his cotemporaries and succeeding generations. In the various relations which he sustained, and the diversified circumstances of his eventful life, his devotion to the service and glory of God was equally manifest. It was manifest also in his household arrangements in the administration of his government, in his intercourse with other nations, and when called to embattled field. *Habitually* he acknowledged his dependence upon God, by seeking the guidance of his wisdom, and offering to him his devout thanksgiving for his personal and domestic blessings, and the signal prosperity which marked his reign. Equally prompt and cheerful was he in acknowledging God in seasons of trial and suffering. When the object of Saul's cruel persecution, during the unnatural revolt of his son Absalom, and when reviled and cursed by Shimei, he recognized the hand of God in these deeply afflictive events, and bowed in sweet submission to his will.

I am aware that the character of David was not faultless. In numbering his people from motives of ostentation, and

especially in the affair relating to Uriah, the conduct of David was highly culpable. Those, however, who make these transgressions the occasion of aspersing his character, and representing him as a vain and immoral man, would do well to remember that he ingenuously confessed and deeply deplored them. Equally does it become them to bear in mind the fact that character is not formed by a few isolated acts, but by a man's prevailing spirit and deportment. Tried by this test, no one qualified to judge will deny that the character of David was formed by a combination of rare excellencies. The general course of his life, and the sacred odes in which he gave utterance to the devout affections of his heart, exhibit a strength of love to God, and zeal for his honor and for the prosperity of his kingdom, which have rarely been equalled. In his generation, he promptly, cheerfully, habitually, and without reserve, "served the will of God." In this respect, our deceased father and friend strikingly resembled him. Indeed, *his* character possessed all the excellencies of the devout psalmist and king of Israel, without his faults.

The record of the *death* of David is what his general character and God's gracious promises would lead us to expect. Ten centuries after he had exchanged his kingdom on earth for one eternal in the heavens, and the crown which adorned his brow below for one of unfading glory above, the unerring pen of inspiration made the record concerning his life and death, "After he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep."

What a wonderful description is this of death! From death everything living shrinks back with dread. It mocks at every earthly distinction, breaks asunder the strongest and most endearing ties which nature knows, suspends all the vital functions, transforms our bodies into masses of cold, unconscious clay, and delivers them over to corruption and worms. But to believers in Jesus, death is stripped of its terrors—deprived of his sting. Such is death to them, that it is appropriately denominated sleep. Not, however, in the sense of the advocates either of annihilation or materialism. Believers in the former have *no* hope beyond the grave, either for themselves or their friends. To *their* grief under bereavement, death adds the anguish of despair. Blessed be God, the Gospel assures its believers that their kindred, who die in the Lord, have not ceased to exist,—that they only sleep.

And the Scriptures give no support to the cheerless theory that the souls of departed saints are unconscious from the death of their bodies till the morning of the resurrection. To the penitent malefactor at his side, our adorable Redeemer, when dying upon the cross, said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." What but the animating hope that at the death of his body, his soul would *immediately* enter

heaven, made the Apostle Paul so vehemently "desire to depart and be with Christ." He evidently considered absence from the body inseparably connected with the presence of his spirit with the Lord. Everlasting thanks to the God of all comfort and spiritual consolation and joy, for the *assurance* which he has given us that the sleep of the pious dead is not the sleep of unconsciousness. It is true, indeed,—delightfully true, that the *bodies* of the saints, vacated by the departure of their deathless souls, *do* sleep in unconsciousness in the grave. Infirmity, weariness, and pain, shall afflict them no more. It is not on this account merely or chiefly, however, that the oracles of eternal truth affirm of departed saints, "they sleep." The language is descriptive of their *safe* and *happy* departure.

To them death is devoid of danger. From his approach they have no more to dread than from the repose of the night when the toils of the day are ended. I mean in respect to the spiritual and immortal part of their nature. The panting and agony which often precede and accompany the death of the body, we cannot and ought not to view with indifference. They are among the bitter fruits of our apostacy from God, and ought to be contemplated with dread. But in respect to the souls of believers, death is perfectly innoxious. It is mainly the fear of what lies beyond, which makes it the dread and terror of the ungodly. If their hearts be not fearfully "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and their consciences seared as with a hot iron," to them death brings fear and dismay.

But the Lord Jesus Christ has freed his followers from the power of the cruel spoiler. The blow which prostrates their bodies, releases their souls from the bondage of corruption. They enter into rest,—rest, balmy and refreshing, free from all the cares, labors, disappointments, anxieties and sorrows of the present life, and sin, the parent of all our woes. In this vale of tears, they are frequently the subjects of disappointment, pain, anxiety, and sorrow,—sometimes of almost heartbreaking bereavement. They have, indeed, supports and consolations, which others know not of, but not less—often more frequently than the children of disobedience, their eyes are suffused with tears, their bosoms convulsed with sighs, and their cheeks furrowed with care and grief. And they have conflicts, fears, and sorrows, peculiar to themselves. As soldiers under the Captain of salvation, they are required to watch unto prayer, to strive against sin, and to "fight the good fight of faith." Death brings to them the rest which they need and desire. With their heads pillowed upon the breast of their almighty and most merciful Redeemer, they fall asleep sweetly in him. This thought is thus appropriately and beautifully expressed by a gifted evangelical poetess:

"How blest the righteous when he dies,—
When sinks a weary soul to rest!
How mildly beam the closing eyes!
How gently heaves th' expiring breast!

So fades a summer's cloud away;
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er;
So gently shuts the eye of day:
So dies a wave along the shore.

A holy quiet reigns around,—
A calm which life nor death destroys;
Nothing disturbs the peace profound,
Which his unfetter'd soul enjoys."

Such is death to those who die in the Lord. What a powerful antidote to excessive sorrow on account of their removal.

Another ground of consolation is their condition in and after death. The cruel spoiler sunders every other tie;—separates friend from friend—pastors from their people, and people from their pastors—parents from their children, and children from their parents—husbands from their wives, and wives from their husbands, but cannot separate believers from their adorable Redeemer. When dead, they are as really united to him as they were while living. Their bodies, it is true must see corruption, but he has pledged his veracity to be the Guardian of their sleeping dust. Their entire persons are his property, so intimately united to him that they are said to be "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Will he then cease to care for the mouldering bodies of his saints? No, never. They sleep in him.

And their sleep is to be broken. When he shall return to judge the world in righteousness, he will raise and reorganise their bodies, and make them "like unto his glorious body." All ancient and modern theories to the contrary notwithstanding, his Word no less clearly asserts than it does the fact of his own resurrection, that the bodies of his saints shall be raised glorious and immortal. The apostle, in his masterly defence of this article of the Christian faith, affirms of the body, "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."

How appropriately, then, is it said of the patriarch David, "he fell on sleep!" To him death brought no peril. That it would not be was himself fully persuaded. In anticipation of his departure from the world, in the exercise of assured hope, he joyfully exclaimed, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." His soul is now with his Redeemer in glory. In the morning of the resurrection, his body will be raised spiritual and immortal, and his entire person be received into heaven, where

he will "ever be with the Lord." This language, we are fully persuaded, is equally applicable to the venerable and beloved man whose loss we now deplore.

On his occasion I should do injustice to my own feelings and his memory, and I doubt not disappoint the reasonable expectations of many present, were I not to give some account of his life and character, his labors in the vineyard of his Divine Master, and his views and anticipations of the solemn event which has occasioned these services.

David Porter was born in Hebron, Connecticut, May 27th, 1761. His father's name was Increase Porter. His mother's, previous to her marriage, was Mary Niles. Of her he could have known very little, as she died when he was but four years old. With the exception of ten months, which he spent in the army of the Revolution, he resided in his father's famitill he was about eighteen years of age.

In the year 1780, he entered Darmouth College, and was graduated in 1784. During his collegiate course he devoted himself with great assiduity to his studies, and attained a high reputation for scholarship. What rendered that period of his life most deeply interesting and memorable, however, was the change which took place in his views and feelings respecting the infinitely important subject of religion. From his childhood he had been occasionally the subject of deep religious impressions. The second year of his collegiate life, the college and vicinity were visited by a remarkable effusion of the Holy Spirit Devoted to his studies, and fixed in his purpose to attain eminence in them, at the commencement of this work of grace, he resolved not to have his attention diverted from the object which he had in view. But God had other purposes concerning him. He soon became the subject of agonizing convictions of sin. "I was brought," he said "to see my heart,—its total sinfulness And feel myself utterly lost and undone." In a few weeks he indulged the pleasing hope of reconciliation to God and accptance "in the Beloved," and soon after made a public profession of his faith in Christ and devotion to his service.

The two and a half years immediately succeeding the close of his collegiate life he spent in Portsmouth, N. H., in teaching and in studies preparatory to the ministry, under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Buckminiter, of that town, and the Rev. Dr. Stephens, of Kettery. Soon after he was licensed to preach the Gospel, he labored several months in Sanford, in the State of Maine, and was invited to take the pastoral charge of the church in that place, but, for reasons which he deemed sufficient, he declined the acceptance of the call.

In February, 1787, he accepted a call from the Congregational Church of Spencertown, N. Y., and on the 24th day of September, in the same year, he was ordained and installed

pastor of that church, by an ecclesiastical council, called for that purpose.

In October, 1791, he was married to Miss Sarah Collins, daughter of the Rev. Daniel Collins, of Lanesborough, Mass. Delicacy forbids me to say more, and a sense of justice allows me to say no less, than that she was eminently fitted for the station which she was called to fill, and proved to be to Mr. Porter in all respects, "a help, meet for him-" by the kindness of a benignant Providence, they were permitted to enjoy each other's society, and by the soothing and joyous offices of conjugal affection, to minister to each other's happiness almost sixty years. During this period they enjoyed great domestic blessings, and were the subjects of repeated and severe afflictions. Of the six children born to them, only the eldest daughter, the wife of Henry Hill, Esq., of Boston survives. A son and a daughter died young. The other three sons left families to mourn their loss.

Mr. Porter spent fourteen years in Spencertown. His salary being insufficient for the support of his family, he appropriated a portion of his time to teaching, in which employment he was eminently useful. During his ministry in Spencertown, his congregation enjoyed several seasons of divine refreshing, which resulted in cheering additions to the church. There, too, he was associated in fraternal fellowship with ministers of the Gospel in the adjacent part of Massachusetts, of gifted intellect, eminent literary and theological attainments, and devoted piety, among whom were Dr. West, of Stockbridge, Dr. Catlin, of New Marlborough Dr. Hyde of Lee, and Dr. Shephard of Lenox. Theirs were kindred spirits to that of Mr. Porter,—"men of whom the world was not worthy," who finished their course and received their reward before,—some of them long before.—he was called to his eternal rest.

In June, 1803, Mr. Porter resigned his charge in Spencertown, and in the October ensuing, was installed pastor of this church and congregation.* Both the Church and the village were then in their infancy. The congregation being destitute of a house of worship, for several years he preached to them in the old court-house. In the erection of this sanctuary (since re-modeled and brought into its present state of convenience and elegance), he was eminently instrumental, and also in the subsequent erection of the adjacent Lecture-room. Not many years after his removal to this place, he received the honorary dgree of Doctor of Divinity, from Williams' College.

During his ministry here, he had the satisfaction of witnessing the growth and prosperity of the village and of his church and congregation. Notwithstanding the first ten years of his ministry here were marked by no extensive revival of religion, I have heard him say that there was scarce-

* First Presbyterian Church of Catskill, N. Y.

ly any period of that time when some of his people were not inquiring for the path of eternal life.

He continued to labor among you with great ability and faithfulness till June, 1831, when, having entered the seventy-first year of his age, he requested the dissolution of the pastoral relation between himself and the people of his charge. Previously, however, after a season of deep religious declension, he was permitted to reap a rich harvest from the seed which he had sown in former years. As the fruit of this work of the Holy Spirit, during a short period before and within six months after his dismission, about one hundred members were added to the church, His interest in its prosperity continued to the close of his long and useful life.

And his labors in the vineyard of his Divine Master did not cease after his retirement from pastoral duty. The great objects of Christian benevolence had long held a high place in his regards. In 1824 he was chosen a corporate member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and with most of the other National Institutions for the spread of the Gospel in our country and other lands, he was connected from their organization. Immediately after he resigned his charge, he engaged in the service of these institutions, in this county and several adjacent counties, and continued his agency in their behalf till he had completed the eightieth year of his age. In his preaching he aimed to inculcate the great principles of Christian benevolence, and his personal applications for funds were made with judgment and skill, and were eminently successful.

Dr. Porter was a firm friend of literature and science, and of everything calculated to advance the interests of society. His efforts to secure the services of competent teachers for the children and youth of this village, will long be held in grateful remembrance. He likewise took a deep interest in our Colleges; and notwithstanding he had less confidence in the utility and importance of Theological Seminaries than many, he gave them his prayers and patronage.

In the domestic and social relations, Dr. Porter was eminently qualified to receive and communicate pleasure. Ardently attached to his family and friends, and deeply imbued with the spirit of benevolence, he took great delight in imparting happiness. His conversation, though frequently characterized by abruptness of manner and expression, was both pleasing and instructive, and occasionally enlivened by exhibitions of humor and wit, so controlled by discretion and Christian principle that they detracted nothing from the dignity of the Christian and the sacred office of the ministry.

His keen sensibility and great benevolence led him promptly to enter into the joys and sorrows of others. To the afflicted, especially of his flock, he was eminently a son of consolation. With great fidelity and tenderness, he pointed them to the only source of effective consolation, and urged

the duty of acquiescence in the will of God, and joy in his government. His manner of doing this was peculiarly his own. Sometimes a single sententious remark or inquiry, uttered in his significant manner, contained volumes of instruction. Take two examples, as specimens of his method of addressing persons in affliction. On one occasion, when visiting a deeply afflicted family, after making a few appropriate remarks, with great solemnity and tenderness he said to them, "You had better look up." At another time, to a young lady of his flock, whose heart was almost crushed with anxiety for a suffering sister, he put the significant and twice-repeated inquiry, "Can you speak well of God? can you speak well of God?"

In strength of intellect, Dr. Porter had few equals. His discernment was quick and keen, his discrimination accurate, his judgment sound, and his reasoning powers of a very high order. These solid and useful attributes of mind greatly exceeded that of the imagination. The cultivation of this faculty was with him far less an object of attention than the more important ones just mentioned. Hence he was eminently qualified to reason with great accuracy and force.

His style and manner of speaking were characteristic of his strong, original mind, and adapted to make deep impressions. He never sought to ornament his style with flowers of rhetoric and the fascinating imagery of the imagination. He aimed to make it clear, concise, and forcible, and he succeeded. No one could listen to his public discourses, nor read them, without being convinced of his honesty and sincerity of purpose, and his strong desire to communicate to other minds the thoughts and feelings which glowed in his own. In the arrangement of the topics of his discourses, his method of discussing them, and the perspicuity and energy of his language, he furnished a model, which, it is believed, few could adopt without profit to themselves and their hearers.

In his preaching, he dwelt much upon those doctrines of the Gospel which are characteristically and appropriately denominated the doctrines of grace. He stated them with great clearness, supported them by forcible reasoning and pertinent Scripture quotations, defended them with signal ability, and applied them to the consciences and hearts of his hearers with great tenderness and power. He believed they tend to make men feel their guilt and entire dependence upon the grace of God for salvation, and to exalt and honor him as the righteous moral Ruler, and the sovereign and efficient Agent, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

His preaching, however, was not *exclusively* doctrinal. He exhibited the various branches of experimental and practical godliness with the same clearness and pungency of application with which he did the doctrines of the Gospel. In the selection of his themes for the pulpit, he seems habitually to

have kept in view the great end of preaching—the glory of God in the conversion of men, and their subsequent growth in knowledge and holiness. He studied, preached, prayed—was "instant in season, out of season," and watched for souls as one who felt he must give account to God.

At the time he commenced his labors here, most of the churches in this region were in their infancy, and but few of them statedly supplied with preaching. To him, and the few associated with him, they looked for advice, and the administration of the sacraments. Over them and others in whose organization *he* had an agency, he watched with a father's solicitude, preached to them occasionally, and labored to procure for them the stated administration of divine ordinances.

The soundness of his judgment, and the ample stores of his theological learning led intelligent laymen and his brethren in the ministry to censult him in cases of difficulty, and on abstruse points of doctrine to pay great respect to his opinions. Both before and since the establishment of Theological Seminaries, many candidates for the ministry, attracted by the fame of his talents and attainments in theology, placed themselves under his instructions, whose Christian and ministerial character he was eminently instrumental in forming for usefulness.

Our venerated friend was sincerely attached to the doctrines and polity of the Presbyterian Church, but was remarkably free from a sectarian spirit. He extended the hand of Christian fellowship to all who gave evidence of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a zealous advocate of Christian union upon the basis of agreement in the belief of fundamental doctrines and toleration in things of minor importance. The division of the Presbyterian Church in 1838, and the causes which led to it, he greatly lamented. Deep and unwavering as was his conviction of the unrighteousness of the excinding acts of 1836, which produced the division, he never exhibited an unkind spirit toward those who passed or attempted to defend them. During the last few years of his life, he often expressed a strong desire for the union of the two branches of the Presbyterian Church in this country, and, should that be found impracticable, their recognition of each other by mutual representation in their respective Assemblies. He was persuaded (and what enlightened and unprejudiced mind is not?) that both bodies are agreed in the belief of all the essential doctrines of the Gospel, and that a practical demonrtration of the fact is unspeakably important to the interests of true religion and the glory of God.

From what has been said, it cannot but be evident that Dr. Porter's Christian character was marked by rare excellencies. Concerning the *reality*, and I might add the depth of his piety, I am persuaded no believer in experimental religion, who knew him, ever doubted. Often during my ministry

here, was my mind deeply affected by exhibitions of his profound humility. From my childhood, I had considered it a privilege to sit at his feet, and learn wisdom. And yet repeatedly did he, with child-like frankness and sincerity, request me to converse with him respecting the nature of his religious exercises. Never have I known an individual whose views of the evil of sin were clearer and whose sense of personal vileness was deeper than were his. And yet he was a *cheerful* Christian. He had clear views of the plan of salvation. While he loathed himself on account of sin, he joyfully believed that he could be forgiven sanctified, and saved by the blood of Christ;—that "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ."

After the infirmities, and especially the weakness of his limbs, render it difficult for him to go out, his delight in the services of the sanctuary, led him to make great exertions to attend upon them. None who had the privilege of listening to his addresses at communion seasons, can have forgotten the tenderness and unction by which they were characterized. On those occasions his heart evidently glowed with love to the Saviour and the souls of men.

On the 24th day of September, 1843, (which was the fifty-sixth anniversary of his ordination,) he preached his last sermon, on the appropriate text, "Brethren, the time is short." This discourse, though not written, was richly stored with appropriate and striking thoughts, delivered with great earnestness and solemnity, and was listened to with fixed attention and deep feeling. The last time he entered this house was on the 28th of July, 1847, when he was called to follow his eldest son, Addison, to the grave. Bowed down with grief, as he then was, and when years before bereaved of his sons William and David, he acknowledged the hand of God in these deeply afflictive visitations, and bowed in sweet submission to the Divine will.

Dr. Porter was an ardent lover of the Word and people of God. After he was confined to his house, he read the Scriptures with great constancy and delight, and derived great enjoyment from the conversation and prayers of Christian friends, and his brethren in the ministry.

With the thoughts of death he was familiar. For years he habitually looked for his summons to eternity. Deep as was his sense of sin and desert of evil at the hand of God, and solemn as were his impressions of a removal from a world of trial to one of eternal retribution, through Christ, he expected to triumph over the last enemy. On one occasion some four or five years since, when I was alone with him, after he had spoken with great seriousness of the solemnity of dying and appearing in the presence of a holy God, with his characteristic brevity and point, he said, "I am ready." When I approached his bed on Wednesday evening of last week; the stupor in

such that I feared he would never again in this world recognize me. In a short time, however, he did, but was unable to converse. The next morning he roused from his lethargy. When I was about to pray with him, I said, Dr. Porter, have you any request which you wish me to make for you? He promptly, replied "Yes, that God may be glorified." This was worthy of his best days, and would have done honor to any inhabitant of earth or heaven. We rejoice in the belief that the request has been in part granted by the admission of his ransomed spirit into the world of the holy and the glorified. Much as we feel our loss in his death, we cannot wish him back again in this world of sin and sorrow. When I think of my obligations to this beloved man,—of the interest which he took in me in my childhood, his kind offices in counselling me and directing my studies preparatory to the ministry, and his friendship to the close of his life, I cannot refrain from giving utterance to the emotions of my soul in the language of Elisha when Elijah was taken from him to heaven: "My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." God in his infinate mercy grant, my dear brethren, that his mantle and a large measure of his spirit may rest upon us.

While we deeply sympathize with you, bereaved friends, we cannot forbear to remind you that there are rich cordials in the bitter cup which you are called to drink. The endeared husband, father, and grand-parent, whose loss you deplore, was spared to you till he had completed more than half of his ninetieth year. Such was his character, that you will ever have occasion to contemplate it with gratitude and pleasure. His memory is fragrant with all that is estimable in human nature, and sactified by the Spirit of holiness. Between you, my venerable friend, and the companion whom God has taken from you, the separation will be short. For almost sixty years, you have traveled the path of life together, and you will soon be reunited. When it shall be the good pleasure of your Heavenly Father to call your spirit to the world of the holy and the blessed, I doubt not that of your departed husband will be first to welcome yours to its pure and blissful companionship and employments, and its sweet and everlasting rest. Could his lips, now sealed in death, give utterance to the most fondly cherished desires of his heart respecting you all, bereaved friends, I do not doubt it would be, that you and your posterity, to the latest generation, might glorify God on earth and enjoy him eternally in heaven.

To this entire community, the death of Dr. Porter is a deeply solemn event. You have all witnessed his catholic spirit, and benevolent labors among you. You have listened to words of eternal life as they dropped from his lips, [redacted] which he offered for your temporal and [redacted]. This side of eternity, you will see his

face and hear his voice no more. He has gone to render up his account, and, through grace in Christ, to receive the recompense promised to his devoted servants. O that by lives consecrated to the service of God, you may be prepared to meet him in heaven!

To those of you who were permitted to sit under his ministry while he was the pastor of this church and congregation, this an hour of solemn and thrilling interest. It is inseparably connected with the remembrance of his faithful ministrations among you. You are witnesses of his ardent desires aud untiring labors to glorify God by training up the members of his flock for usefulness and heaven. His laborious efforts to establish your faith in the great facts, doctrines, and duties of revealed religion, you cannot have forgotten. It was his earnest desire and prayer that you might be established immovably in the belief and love of the truth, and that its blessed fruits might be exhibited in your lives. His public and private labors for these infinitely important ends, and his fervent prayers for your salvation, have not faded from your memories. But the depth of his solicitude for you, and his holy wrestlings with God in secret that you might be sound in the faith, and a united and eminently holy church, you will never know till the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. God grant that the ministry of his servant among you may be "a savor of life unto life" to you all.

And now, devoted and beloved servant of God, a short farewell. May the grace that made thee what thou wast as a saint, and as a minister of the Lord Jesus, prepare us to meet and dwell with thee eternally in heaven. Amen.

SERMON DXLI.

BY REV. JAMES M. MACDONALD,

FIFTEENTH STREET CHURCH, N. Y.

INFLUENCE AFTER DEATH.

"He being dead, yet speaketh"—HEBREWS 11 : 4.

AMONG the numerous examples which the Apostles gives in this chapter, to illustrate the nature and fruits of the grace of faith, is that of Abel. By his faith he offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. There was an essential defect in Cain's offering. It was not a sacrifice. It consisted of the fruits of the ground; it pointed not to the great sacrifice to be made for sin by the Lamb of God; and therefore, instead of being a sign of his faith, it proved that he was destitute of this saving principle. Abel offered the firstlings of the flock, thus acknowledging himself to be a sinner, who could be saved only through the blood of atonement. And when he fell by the hand of his vindictive brother, his soul went to the embraces of that Saviour, whose blood, by the eye of faith, he saw typified in the crimson drops that stained his own altar.

The example of Abel is full of instruction: "By it, he being dead, yet speaketh," declaring that God may be worshipped acceptably, through faith in Christ; that sin cannot be pardoned without an atonement; that Christ is the only propitiation for our sins; that true faith and repentance are connected with righteousness of life; that such a life, although it may excite the rage and persecution of the enemies of God, whilst it will not be without a glorious reward in tha life to come, will be exerting a silent but mighty influence, after death has done its work on the body.

The influence of good men, in this world, after their death, is the important subject which the text naturally suggests, and to which your attention is invited.

We are too prone to feel that our influence is to cease at [illegible]. True, that when we leave the world we shall cease to [illegible] more influence upon it in the ordinary mode, by

which living men exert an influence upon one another. The voice that was eloquent in defence of the great principles of justice or freedom, or in defending the doctrines and enforcing the truths of the Gospel, is heard no more. The eye that beamed with affection and intelligence is closed in the socket. The hand that was skilful in works of art, or that was held out to stay the tottering steps of the feeble, or to point men the way to heaven, is wrapped in the shroud. But our influence may outlast—the influence of some good men, and of some bad men, too, has outlasted—the marble which affection rears to commemorate their names. Our dust may be blown, and "no mound or stone tell whither," but our influence cannot thus be lost. It can be sealed up in no sepulchre, nor blown away by any wind.

We, my hearers, now feel the influence of those who lived before us, and whose bodies long since furnished their last meal to the hungry worm. Men inherit not merely the possessions of the dead—the houses they built, the fields they cultivated—but to some extent their principles and their habits. We are not only on the same stage on which those who have gone before us acted their parts, but are reproducing the same characters, and acting over again the same parts. Only the *dramatis personæ* have been changed. A century ago, there were here, as now, parents and children, teachers and scholars, magistrates and subjects, pastors and hearers. Could we take a whole view of the past, and compare it with society as it is at present, although we might descry many beneficial and some sad changes, we should doubtless appear but as the representatives or substitutes of the forefathers who slumber in the grave-yard. Death, the great harvester, will continue to put in the sickle; others will soon stand, or sit, in the places we now fill. We shall die: but God grant that instead of the fathers may be the children; and that there may never be wanting those who shall contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and by holiness of life, shall witness a good profession. And when, at the voice of the archangel, the ancient covering of the grave shall be broken, and parents shall meet their children and their children's children, and ministers and people shall stand confronted at the bar of Christ, God grant that it may then appear, to our common and everlasting joy, that we have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. As we feel the influence of those that have gone before us, and rejoice in it, to the same extent in which they were the faithful followers of Christ, so must they who come after us feel ours, and they will rise up and call us blessed, if the silent voice we leave behind us shall plead for virtue and for God.

How naturally, then, does it follow that we should live every day, not for the present alone, but for future generations. We owe them a debt—the same debt which our generations owed us. The past we are not

may teach us much; it speaks as with a thousand voices of warning and instruction; and every wise man will sit down patiently and docilely at the feet of the past. We must be pupils of the Past: we cannot teach it. But the Future we may instruct; the Future we may make our pupil; to the Future we may be as a Gamaliel. And thus we may unite the two characters of being pupils to the past and instructors to the future. Our position as pupils is an important one. How much we may learn! and what poor proficiency we have made! The Past is looking towards us, as with reproving look for despising the lessons of wisdom which she invites us to learn. But upon this I will not now dwell, but will simply remind you that the same relation which we sustain to the past, the future will sustain to us. May we be as worthy of filling the office of teachers, as were many of those who have preceded us! Hence the duty of casting ourselves forward to live for that future, to live for posterity. It involves interests dear as our civil liberty, dear as the moral purity of society, dear as the cross of Jesus. The statesmen of one generation are the schoolmasters of those that come after. A Sydney, a Hale, a Washington, lived not for their own generation alone. A Milton sang for us no less than for his own contemporaries. A Luther, a Knox, a Howe, a Baxter, fought our battles, and elaborated sermons for our edification. Live, then, O live for posterity.

In doing this it is not necessary to live exclusively for the future, or to lose sight of the present interests of the world. We can serve future generations with no better effect, than by serving our own well. Let our plans be for immediate, and then they will be for prospective, usefulness. We are not to "stop to dry up the fluids of present vitality that we may embalm ourselves as mummies for posterity." Yet, as has been said, we should strive chiefly to act in the present, and to draw our bow with such tension that it may reach within the veil of the great hereafter. Would you know how you may best serve the future, it is by serving well your own generation. Thus the present and the future seem to have in us a common stock. As far as the great moral of our life is concerned, there is to them a partnership. We are not, then, by pleading with men to live for posterity, diverting them from the duty they owe the present. No men served their own generation to better effect than Baxter, and Flavel, and Edwards, and do we not feel their influence? And who will presume to fix its boundaries? Like a refreshing and health-giving wave, it will roll on, blessing the future as it has blessed us.

Who will undertake to estimate fully the posthumous influence of such men as Doddridge, Romaine, and Baxter? [redacted] comforted and animated in duty [redacted] Everlasting Rest! How many [redacted] to a sense of their pecu-

ous condition, by the same writer's "Call to the Unconve
ed!" What multitudes have perused the "Rise and P
gress," and have been led to a sense of their ruined conditi
and to a saving knowledge of Christ! Just look at the
fluence of that little tract, "The Dairyman's Daughter,"
Leigh Richmond. It has been translated into a great varie
of languages, and to how many has it been blessed as t
means of their conversion to Christ! Bunyan's Pilgri
Progress we read in childhood, and when we become olde
loses none of its attractions. These works have perha
been blessed to the eternal good of more than their auth
were permitted to be the means of benefitting by the livi
voice. Like the bones of the prophet, of which we read
sacred story, which imparted life to a dead body thro
into his sepulchre, these works have been the means of ra
ing multitudes to spiritual life. These are the best relics
the good—relics which we may well reverence, and with
superstition, may carry near our hearts. Aprons and ha
kerchiefs carried from Paul, and the shadow of Peter, whi
fell upon the sick, were blessed to their healing; and t
published writings of men eminent for gifts and piety, G
has been pleased to honor, to the spiritual healing of a mu
tude of souls. By these precious volumes, they in a figu
still live, and act upon the minds of their fellow-men. Bei
dead, they yet speak; their actions "smell sweet and bloss
in their dust."

Secondly, I would urge this duty further, from the co
sideration that it is impossible so to live that we shall exe
no influence after death. That is, if our influence be n
good, it must be evil. It cannot possess a merely negati
character. It is impossible that a moral agent should occu
a position so isolated or neutral as to exert no influence up
others. He may be unconscious of it, but it is going for
by every channel, upon the right hand and the left, at mo
ing, noon, and night. When we go out, when we come
when we rise up, and when we sit down. It is felt by
who are brought into social contact with us, for good, or f
evil.

The infidel sentiments which were disseminated by V
taire, that great luminary of modern infidelity, in his volu
nous productions of Philosophy, History, Poetry, and Fictio
were instrumental in poisoning not only the minds of the m
of his own country and generation, but their disastrous
fluence survived, and still survives him. Like the pestile
stench of a body which perished from the plague, it has
fected, and to this day continues to infect, the living. Fran
fixed not its boundaries; but it burdened every wind th
swept over the countries of Europe. Even the broad Atlan
tic was not too mighty a barrier for it to overleap. It made
both Americas tremble. Nor did it
Christendom. Missionaries sent to

bring them to the knowledge of Christianity, have found his infidel productions translated, and put into the hands of idolators, especially to counteract their efforts. Such has been the influence for evil of one man, living and dead. I have selected, it is true, a notable example, but the same principles hold true in respect to others of less abilities and attainments, and who exert a less commanding, but no less decided influence, in their respective spheres. The obscure man, who never enjoyed the advantages of mental cultivation, and of whose outgoings and incomings no chronicler takes note, has his own little world; it may be his own neighborhood merely, or his own family; but there the unrecorded conversation, and acts, and deportment, of which history will indite not a line, are leaving impressions, perhaps of evil, too, as indelible as the mind of man can receive. The influence of the "village Hampden," or "some mute, inglorious Milton," may be felt a century after men have ceased to visit their graves. We are all capable of affecting other minds, and every day, and every hour of the day, however unmindful of the fact, are thus employed. If, then, to exert some kind of influence is the law of our condition, how important is the duty to render it salutary! "I seem to be walking on a hair," said one as eminent for piety as he was for ministerial gifts, "and hardly dare go down to breakfast or dinner lest I should do something which may hurt the cause of religion." And who will say that he had too nice a sense of the importance which may attach to the most trivial affairs in which we may be engaged? Look at a parent, surrounded with his family. Every word, every look even, is fraught with important consequences. The young immortals who look to him with filial reverence, to whom every word he utters is law, whose characters are in a moulding state, receive his impress just as the melted wax receives the impress of the incumbent seal. It is the influence which fathers and mothers exert over their offspring which is the most enduring and important in its character. Authority and affection combine to give it strength, and to render it almost omnipotent. But there is no relation in life, of which it is not true that a powerful influence goes forth reciprocally from the parties between whom it subsists. Brothers, sisters, friends, companions, are at once the objects and the sources of an influence which is certainly felt, and which is productive of the most important effects for good or evil on their respective habits, sentiments, and characters.

But it is unnecessary to illustrate this point further. The fact is so obvious as to be beyond dispute, that influence—moral influence—is one of the inseparable conditions of our earthly being. The man cannot be found who is so obscure, or so ignorant, or even so degraded by vice, as not to have some measure of influence. The example of the poor drivelling sot, however he may excite our disgust or our pity, is not

without its effect. There is not a person present, young
old, who is wholly destitute of influence for good or evil.
is a talent, my hearers, for which we are accountable, a
therefore it ought to be our chief study to improve it we
We may have five talents; we may have two. And if
have but one, we shall be found inexcusable if we misapp
it.

Thirdly, I would notice briefly what is essential to a sa
tary influence. It was faith in Abel by which it is said
the text that he, being dead, yet speaketh. It was faith
which the elders obtained a good report. Faith is a migh
principle; for it makes things hoped for as substantial as
they were already in possession, and things invisible as re
as if they were already present. The things revealed to
refer to the past, the present, and the future. It rests up
the revelation or testimony of God, and not upon the visio
of a fanciful mind. It demonstrates to the human soul t
existence, the perfections, and the presence of God; that
made, governs, and will judge the world; that his law is ho
and his service every way reasonable; that by the death
his Son, salvation has been provided for all who believe; a
it is an influential principle, because it leads a man to act
cording to his convictions. It is *the influence* of a living fai
which distinguishes it from that which the apostle style
"dead faith." It leads to a deportment corresponding to t
great and solemn truths which are addressed to the und
standing and the heart. It is the distinguishing mark of
soul which has been born of God; it is the new princi
which is implanted in the soul in regeneration. In those
cient worthies of whom mention is made in the chapter
the text, its power was manifested in constraining them to
course of conduct by which their example still speaks,
claring that God is faithful to his promises, and that t
most useful life to men is one that is conformed to his co
mandments. Abraham and Moses, and others in the sa
catalogue, were eminently useful in their day and generati
and their influence continues to be felt, and will never
less, as long as the world shall stand, because they believ
God; they believed his testimony as final and decisive, a
made it the measure of their obligations to him. Their o
inquiry was, "Has God spoken?" Their feelings and c
duct were controlled by what he had spoken, as fully as
the things revealed were the objects of sight, or capable
being demonstrated. All that Abraham required him to
out from his own country, to sojourn as in a strange land, w
the call of God. He believed, "for he looked for a ci
which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God
Noah needed but the warning of God to impel him to t
herculean labor of preparing an ark for the saving of hims
and his house. It was by faith, simple faith in God, th
Moses was willing to sacrifice his brilliant worldly prospe

as the nominal son of Pharaoh's daughter, and to suffer affliction with the people of God. Supported by the same principle, he forsook the land of bondage at the head of the dispirited thousands of Israel, although he well knew that he would be pursued by the warriors of Pharaoh.

My hearers, if we would accomplish the great end of our existence, be useful in the noblest sense, so that from our graves there "shall arise some spirit to walk the world," making it the better that we have lived and died, we must possess that faith without which it is impossible to please God. Whatever natural gifts we may possess; however highly cultivated our minds; however great the power in our hands, or exalted the station we fill, it is not possible that our influence should be wisely and profitably directed, if we do not act under the control of that principle which is the gift of God. It is faith, and faith alone, by which we may become spiritual and acceptable worshippers of God. It is by faith alone that we can receive Christ as the great propitiation for our sins. It is by faith that the invisible things of eternity become living realities. And it is by faith that we may have evidence of our acceptance with God, and have his Spirit witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God. O how useful to men is a holy, devotional life! The prayers of a good man avail much. The world does not know how much it is indebted to the intercessions of the sincere and humble believer. He may pass unnoticed in the world, but, having power as a prince to prevail with God, he wields a mighty influence. What if we cannot see the precise point where the prayer of faith touches the chain of causes which is held by the hands of the unseen God; we can read on the inspired page that the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much. We have also the record of numerous instances of answer to prayer which exemplify and confirm the truth of the promise. We cannot pierce the clouds which surround the throne of Deity, but we may behold the glory that gilds the sacred page. We cannot behold the operation of that wonderful power which works with a secret and amazing force, blinding angels and men, and all orders of being, in subjection to him who wields it, but we may behold the leader and deliverer of God's ancient people, pleading with him as a man pleadeth with his friend, and the impending judgments averted;—we may behold the patriarch wrestling till break of day with the angel of the covenant, and prevailing;—the prophet on the mount, which overlooks a territory parched with heat, and dry as the ashes of the hearth, his head bowed in supplication to his God—when, lo! the clouds roll up from the Mediterranean with a copious blessing for the earth. The long track of ages, from the time when Enoch walked with God to the present hour, has been marked with proof that the prayer of faith has influence in the court of heaven. It is

Christ in the prayers of saints which makes them a sweet-smelling savor unto God. His mediation is our only way of success. His name we mention in all our petitions; the merit of his blood we plead. Sinners, unworthy in themselves, through the righteousness of the dearly beloved Son of God, find a gracious acceptance. Their cry is, "See, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of thy Anointed." And a voice from the most excellent Glory replies, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." As in sacred story the angel is described ascending in the smoke of the offering, so Christ ascends in the incense of all the believer's prayers, and brings them near the throne of his Heavenly Father.

LIVING AFTER DEATH

BY THE EDITOR.

The influence which mind exerts upon mind is a mysterious and powerful characteristic of our being. It enters into every act, relation, and circumstance of life. It begins with moral agency, and extends along the entire line of existence. It is ever flowing out from us through a thousand channels and agencies, over the surface of society. No man can divest himself of this power, or refrain from exercising it; it is a condition of moral existence; we must exert a deep and lasting influence on the world, for good or for evil. A link, unseen, yet real, connects us all with the past and with the future. Those influences which are moulding our character, and working out our destiny, took their rise far up the stream of time; we did not create them, and we cannot arrest or escape them. And we, in turn, are living for coming ages; souls yet unborn will feel our influence, and be saved or damned by it. The good man little knows the extent of that blessed power which he will silently wield over human minds and hearts when he has ceased to be; the fruit of it all gathered to heaven will fill him with adoring wonder. And the sinner knows not how fearfully his influence will accumulate in after ages, nor how many souls will charge their sins upon him in the judgment-day.

"We are fearfully and wonderfully made." Such are the elements of our own being, and such our relations to others, that we cannot die in this world or the next. How numberless are our actions!—and not one of them will ever find a grave, or live an idle life, or prove false to its parentage. They may be unwise and regretted by us; the work of a moment's folly or passion: no matter, we have given them life and we cannot take it away: and they will live on in their consequences when the occasion which called them into

being, and the remembrance of the deeds themselves, have perished; live still to fasten impressions on human character and control the destiny of souls immortal.

The wicked Cain is alive still on the earth; his type of character is manifest, and his footprints are seen along the pathway of the living world. The man who hates goodness and sheds innocent blood, copies the example and acts out the spirit of the first murderer. Abel is not dead. He belongs to living piety, as well as to history. By his recorded example of obedience and faith, and by the memory of all that he was, he is present with the child of God in every land and age of the world, declaring the necessity of faith in Jesus, the mercy and favor shown to the penitent and believing, and the treatment which the good are to expect in this world of enmity and death. All the great and good of past ages are speaking to us—with united voice crying to us to press on in the race and seize the immortal crown; their influence, in letters of light and purity, is recorded on every page of the world's history; it is embodied in a thousand forms of living truth, and freedom and piety. The Voltaires, and Paines, and Byrons of past days, are still leading actors in the great drama of life. Their monuments stand thick along the road we are traveling to immortality. They live to-day in all those sentiments and movements which are hostile to Christianity, and operate, through a corrupt literature, a false philosophy, and an infidel creed, along all the channels of human intellect, affection and enterprise. On their mission of madness and death, they are traveling round the world. The missionary encounters them in the very heart of heathendom. They are breeding a moral pestilence amid the altars of Christianity. The press is wielding its giant power to give them a yet wider and deeper influence. What a harvest of ruin and damnation will such men reap! What a legacy to leave to posterity! What a curse to entail upon untold generations!

Not less certainly, indeed, does the life of every sinner reach into the future. His influence corrupts and destroys beyond his death-bed. It rolls onward from his grave with a cumulative sweep and strength. His example ruins his children; a whole community is infected by it; the poison courses through all the veins of living men, and flows down the ever-widening channels of human thought and life. And should not every *good* man, therefore, treasure up for posterity a holy influence, to counteract the many examples of wickedness, and perpetuate goodness, and truth, and piety in the earth? Should it not be the strenuous aim of every living man to leave a *good* influence to come after him, since he must leave one of some kind—either a saving or a ruining one? We cannot gather up our influence when we come to die, and take it with us. We cannot bury our example with our bones in the grave, so prevent its breeding a moral pes-

tilence. We cannot take back our words, call in our sentiments, blot out our deeds, and so put an end to our moral being on earth. Many a dying man would give worlds if he could but do this. If he could drag with him into the darkness and oblivion of the grave, his infidelity, his wicked example, and all the evil influences which he has originated, that they might not live after him, to curse his memory, and blast the hopes of his family and friends, and entail misery on the world, he might die in peace. But no; the dying man cannot do it. He has no power over his influence; he cannot stay the waters which he has let out. He has sown the seed, and the harvest is sure to follow. The grave shall receive his body only, the living world will retain his character, example and principles. Death cannot arrest our influence; it may but augment and diffuse it. It will live and yield its fruit when our names have perished from the earth. It may speak for us in praise or blasphemy, in life or death, while time endures. It may go on producing impressions on the living world, which no man or angel can ever efface.

There is a thought here which the minister of Christ, the professional man, and the man of wealth, the Sabbath-school teacher, and above all, the parent, may bring home to his heart with salutary and impressive force. There is a light of *warning* and a light of *encouragement* in it. Each of us may so live as that our very grave shall bloom till the resurrection morn. The good we do is not to be measured by the length of our days, but by our stamp of character, the piety of our purposes, the grandeur of our aspirations and conceptions. Then up and be doing, ye children of light! Every prayer, every charity, every effort for Christ, every tear shed over sinners, will yield a revenue of reward and glory.

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 3, Vol. XXV.] MARCH, 1851. [Whole No. 281.

SERMON DXLII.

BY REV. THOMAS E. VERMILYE, D.D., NEW-YORK.

THE GREAT REVEALER.

"The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—2 Cor. 4 : 6.

To the Scriptures are we indebted for all our practical knowledge of the being, and for all just conceptions respecting the perfections of the one, supreme God. For although his eternal power and Godhead may be so clearly understood by the things that are made, as to leave the atheistical rejector without excuse; yet we do know that, as a matter of fact, all men, of all places, in all ages, when deprived of the light of revelation, have overlooked these unquestionable traces of Deity, and have sunk into the abyss of polytheism and idolatry. With unanimous consent they have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts and creeping things." The Bible, like the telescope, concentrates the scattered rays of Divinity which would otherwise escape our notice, and gives us the only true and perfect image of the Infinite One.

From the same source also do we derive any satisfactory notion concerning the origin of the material universe. It is impossible for the intelligent mind to look abroad upon the heavens, to survey this earth, to examine the varied forms of existence, animate and inanimate, with which both earth and sky are filled, and not ask, Whence came all these things? When, and from what cause did they spring forth; and how have they acquired their present modes of being? Accordingly, the sagacity of men has in all ages been tasked to its utmost at this point. Various schemes of the cosmogony, more or less ingenious and plausible, have been *devised to remove* the difficulties that surround the subject, *and to silence, if not to* satisfy, the curious inquirer. Hence we

hear of the eternity of inert matter; the eternal succession of the generations of men, each individual of whom, however, was finite; the creation of all things, and the reduction of the formless mass into well-defined shapes and proportions by chance, which is but a name for our ignorance of an intelligent Cause; —and hence, too, we are told that the wonderful adaptation of the several classes of beings to subserve obvious and important uses, arises out of the fortuitous concurrence of atoms. These are prominent suggestions among the thoughts of the wise on this subject which are vain. They relieve no obscurity; they satisfy no doubt; they give us no clue through this labyrinth; they do not really tell us when and why the beautiful "creation sprang exulting in its light and harmony from the dark bosom of the void abyss."—But when we open the Bible, all is plain. At the very first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, the mystery is cleared up by the simple utterance, "In the beginning, GOD CREATED." And elsewhere we are told, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water." An almighty and intelligent Cause appears, and his works praise him. He summoned matter into being, when as yet there was none of it. His Spirit brooded over the chaotic mass to give it life. He impressed upon the orbs that float through space their form, and place, and motion. He peopled earth and air with the countless tribes that dwell therein. All creation is the product of his simple fiat. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

On another momentous topic, intimately connected with this, our resort must be the same. The Scriptures alone tell us with what intent, to secure what grand end, all things were made and are kept in being. The investigations of science disclose to us a thousand subordinate uses of beauty or utility to man or to the inferior creation, subserved by the various processes we behold. And when the philosophic mind has generalized to the extent of its capacity, it is very apt to conclude that it has reached the ultimate fact, the final cause of all things, and to rest satisfied that in some material result, or at the most some end by which the intellect of man is gratified and his nature aggrandized, it has laid open the great secret why all things exist as they are; it has discovered the true end for which they were originally made. The pride of the natural heart seems to render us incapable of imagining any nobler object of the vast universe, or of any part of it, than one which has relation chiefly to man's interests and man's enjoyment. Man, the creature, is the centre and the circumference of all existence.—But how different and how much more dignified the view the Bible gives

us of this subject. It tells us that "the Lord hath made all things for himself." He himself, and not his creatures, is the grand end of his works. To give scope and exercise to his intelligent and active nature, he essayed the task of creation. We may suppose a sort of necessity that the Divine Being should make some objective manifestation, such as the universe presents; and then his great idea would be to depict himself, so to speak, in sensible forms to the conception of his creatures. Each department of his works would be an exhibition of some grand characteristic of his nature; and the combined whole would set him forth, "full-orbed, in the bright round of rays complete." That God should glorify himself by demonstrating his being, and illustrating his adorable perfections, that is an object worthy of his infinite power and skill; that is the highest and best end we can imagine in the creation and sustentation of all things.

This end, the Scriptures teach us, is pre-eminently subserved in the work of redemption. Some of the Divine attributes, partially represented in the material system, are more fully developed in the mediation by Jesus Christ. Hence the superiority of the latter over the former is seen, even where they come into direct comparison. But there are other, more exalted and endearing qualities, which, but for some such device as that revealed in the gospel, could never, so far as we can perceive, have had any manifestation whatever. There would have appeared for them neither occasion nor object. The character of God would have wanted its full illustration. And, however much we might have admired his natural attributes in creation, those higher excellences of a moral kind by which love is excited and duty prompted, would have been but faintly, if at all, revealed. In the gospel these are brought out into bold relief. And they are so enforced, that angels turn from other contemplations to look into this "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." If in creation, God appears majestic; in grace, transcendent. "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" is "the glory that excelleth."

By the phrase "the glory of God," I think the apostle would evidently have us to understand, the most resplendent and impressive display of his nature God can give; or at least that our finite powers can receive. It is such a presentation of Divine excellence as fills both mind and heart; as leads our rapt spirits to wonder and adore. Now this is made to us, and, for aught we know, to all ranks of intelligent creatures, angels on high and devils in hell, as well as man upon the earth, "in the face of Jesus Christ." Doubtless we are to interpret this of the Redeemer's person and acts as the Mediator of the New Covenant. To qualify *him for that* office, he who originally was in the *form of God, and thought* it not robbery to be equal with God;

took on him our nature, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He lived a life of great humiliation and sorrow, but of entire obedience to the Divine commands, and thus wrought out a righteousness fully equal to the demands of the law. He taught the will of God more perfectly than it had ever been taught before; wrought miracles in confirmation of his Divine commission and doctrine; and finally, by a death of expiation on the cross, made full atonement for the sins of those for whom he suffered. All this was voluntary on his part, yet by the appointment of the Father; and now, in virtue of his merit, God can freely pardon and save those who, though hell-deserving, rely by faith on this one, all-sufficient sacrifice in their behalf. God can now be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. This system, sometimes, with expressive brevity, styled "the doctrine of the cross," "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," is comprised in the person and work of Christ; and it is God's crowning achievement. When Moses descended from the terrible mount, at the giving of the law, his face did shine with so divine a lustre, that the children of Israel could not steadily look upon it; it seemed to shadow forth the glory of Jehovah in that dispensation. But more luminously did his glorious attributes shine forth through the New Testament economy, in the face of Jesus Christ; a more exalted Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises.

Let us then give our attention to this theme, and endeavor to realize the beauty and force of the apostle's idea.

I. We observe, that the provision of Christ as Mediator pre-eminently displays the GOODNESS of God. Goodness is a general name for all those kind, condescending, compassionate qualities of Deity, which are variously displayed in his providence towards our race, and are expressed by terms diversified mainly by the occasion or objects of their manifestation. It is bounty, as it leads him to create or to provide for the safety and enjoyment of intelligent beings. It is love, benevolence, as it prompts him to delight in and rejoice over them. It is grace when he does good to the undeserving; compassion, mercy, when he succors both the unworthy and miserable; patience, long-suffering, when he forbears with those who provoke and insult his majesty and requite evil for his good. Now it must be apparent, that those exercises which are characterized as grace, mercy, compassion, patience, long-suffering, are a much higher display of the general affection of goodness, than those which pass under the distinctive names of bounty, or benevolence. The latter may be but the outflowing of a mild and generous nature; the former is apt to be contrary to every natural prompting of the heart. The one may arise without any forethought, as a mere instinctive act of mind seeking the gratification which *kindness towards* those we approve imparts to ourselves; the

other springs from reflection, and often from great self-control. It is a magnanimous movement to succor the misery of those whose vices excite our moral disapprobation, or whose acts of personal wrong have injured our honor and inflamed our resentments. There may be nothing in the one case beyond the indulgence of a natural amiability; the other is the result of thought, moral judgment, and a virtuous self-constraint, and fairly brings out the heart's noblest affections, and reveals the loftiest traits of character. Such is our view of this matter in relation to men. We never falter in regard to it. Our minds at once instinctively make the discrimination, and our moral sense cannot but approve it. And if any other rule applies to the Divine Being in the exercise of his goodness, we cannot know it, we have no faculties to comprehend it. Compassion, grace, mercy, rather than mere bounty or benevolence, is the pre-eminent glory of God's goodness. Now it is precisely this exercise of this Divine attribute which appears "in the face of Jesus Christ." For the objects of his intervention were not simply creatures susceptible of enjoyment, towards whom benignity might be extended; nor even innocent sufferers whose unmerited woes would appeal with resistless eloquence to a sympathizing heart. Ah, no! How different the representation which the whole Bible makes of this point, and which all experience and the observation of all times and places serve rigidly to confirm. They were sinners; an apostate race; rebellious and depraved; who had cast off the fear of Jehovah; had been most ungrateful under accumulated loads of benefits; a seed of iniquity, and justly exposed to the penalty foretold to the violators of the holy law. They were wretched and miserable, helpless and hopeless in themselves, and without any refuge or known relief. God, the offended Sovereign, might, without any impeachment of his character, have left them to the ruin their sin had caused, and the adoring universe would have exclaimed, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when thou judgest and condemnest!" Moreover, the benefits he came to bestow were not common bounties to embellish or elevate their outward condition during a brief sojourn on earth; but blessings that reach the wants of the ruined soul, and compass the duration of its immortal existence. That God should spare them on the earth, that he should continue to feed and clothe and sustain them, presents truly a rare instance of his goodness. But how much more glorious does this attribute appear, when he so pities, that he conceives the idea of salvation from the curse their sin deserved; provides the method in the mediatorial life and death of his own Son; sends him to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; and at length gives him to the cross for those who were not *only vile and rebellious*, but who through four thousand *years, from generation* to generation, had showed the virulence

of their corruption by a course of progressive transgression. He saw what they did not see: that their sin took hold on hell. He felt what they did not feel: desire for their recovery. He stooped to do what they could not do: to provide a ransom, and open a passage from the gloom of perdition to the security and delights of heaven. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his Son to die for us." The source, the objects, and the final end of this grace, prove it to be the chief effort of Divine goodness. Yet let it be observed, that any view of human depravity which does away with the necessity of a true atonement for sin; any scheme of belief which makes Christ's interposition less than mercy for the lost, though it may be put forth under the pretence of honoring God, whom, it may be alleged, our doctrine on this subject represents as cruel and vindictive; any such theory really lessens the grandeur of this transaction as an exhibition of God's perfections. It substitutes for mercy, the highest exercise of goodness, the lower indulgence of mere good-will, or bounty; and instead of enhancing the honor of Jehovah, dims the lustre of his ineffable glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

II. The glory of Divine HOLINESS appears most conspicuously in the mediation by Jesus Christ. This perfection may be defined, that essential quality of the Divine Nature which consists in entire freedom from all pollution and hatred of it, and in a perfect love of everything that is pure, and true, and right, and good. It has been well styled the sum of the Divine attributes, the perfection of all perfections. It restrains each within its proper sphere, and guides and controls the whole. Without it mercy would be weak good-nature, and justice would degenerate into remorseless severity. Without it we could have no assurance that the Deity would remain a gracious Father or a righteous Sovereign. That it is essential therefore to all proper ideas of God, none can doubt. That the Divine Being himself so regards it, is apparent from the declaration that he is "of jealous holiness, and cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence." When he would add emphasis and solemnity to his promises or threatenings, he is said to "swear by his holiness." The ascription which angels regard as most honorable, and which they offer before the throne with ceaseless fervor, is, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!"

God manifested this attribute in his creating work, in that every creature capable of holiness he formed perfect in it; and as all things else were good, each in its kind, so man was made upright, bearing God's moral image, consisting in true holiness, which is the chief excellence of our nature. In providence, he marked his love of holiness, by giving to rational creatures a law enforced by the most rigid sanctions, requiring spotless purity *of heart* and life. And along the page of history he has,

from time to time, reared impressive monuments of this same disposition. He hurled from heaven the angels who kept not their first estate, but sinned, and reserves them in chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day. He deluged the old world with a flood of water; and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from the Lord out of heaven. When the iniquity of the Amorites was full, he visited them with his wrath. He overthrew Jerusalem and scattered the Jews, his covenant people, over the face of the earth. And in instances numerous and conspicuous of his judgments upon incorrigible offenders, both individuals and nations, from age to age, has he vindicated his perfect purity. The elements of nature and the fierce passions of man have been made subservient ministers of his will. No age, no nation, scarce a spot of the peopled earth that has not beheld some signal display of his hatred of sin and his determination to punish it. The very globe is scarred with the lightnings of his anger; and as if to mark the sad truth that all are perverted and obnoxious to punishment, not giants of iniquity only are selected from the mass, but whole communities—the sportive child and the prattling babe, the infant of days with the man of hoary hairs—are alike involved in his terrible judgments. Nor can any satisfactory reason be given for this, but that we are a race of sinners and therefore we suffer. These visitations are unmistakable proofs that the Divine Being loves righteousness and hates iniquity; that he is absolutely just and holy in his character.—But mark now the illustrations of the same attribute "in the face of Jesus Christ." In the person of this Mediator it is exhibited in the choice of one to make atonement who was without stain of natural corruption; and who, though appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh, and passing life amidst infinite temptations, was yet upheld and made an incomparably glorious pattern of perfect holiness in heart and life. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and has left an example of the possibility and excellence of true and untarnished purity even in one of our race, to the entire vindication of God's holy law and the upholding of virtue among men. Again, in the work of the Mediator, Divine holiness is seen in still requiring of this victim, though in himself innocent, when he consents to stand in the place of sinners, that he should exhaust the curse which they deserved, wrath to the uttermost. The justice of Jehovah could require, could accept no less than the penalty due to sin. It was appeased in the voluntary sacrifice of this Mediator Jesus, this days-man who gave himself a ransom for many, and thus satisfied the law and made it honorable. Why must he suffer? Because so the threatening required. But why could not the woe be remitted at the mere good pleasure of God, or upon the mere repentance of the transgressor? *Because then Divine* veracity would have been impeached in the

disregard of a positive threatening; because then no deeply moving lesson of the exceeding evil of sin, no grand moral influence to humble, to restrain, to regenerate and purify, such as now proceeds from the cross of Christ, could have been exhibited to the awed universe of moral beings; because the truth, the justice, the holiness of God, and the ends of moral government sternly forbade. More impressive was that spectacle, more eloquent its teachings of the nature of the Divine government, of the inviolability of law, and the immaculate purity of the Deity, than any other exhibition that ever had been or ever could be made. That "God spared not his own Son, but gave him up to die for sinners," gives me a new view of his infinite holiness that fills me with amazement and awe. Would he have adopted such peculiar methods, would he have required so costly a sacrifice, if sin had been a trivial evil in his empire, or if holiness had not demanded a most signal vindication? When I behold in the person and work of my Redeemer the glory of the Divine holiness, which, rather than sin should go unpunished, lays on him the iniquity of us all, deeply is my soul humbled before God. I shrink in my loathesomeness from the eye of omniscient purity, and exclaim with overwhelming emotion, Unclean, Unclean! Not so subduing to the Israelites were the thunders and lightnings of the terrible mount, as to the convinced sinner is the spectacle of the one offering on Calvary, in which he beholds in strange conjunction, the goodness, the justice, the holiness of God.

III. Wisdom is a glorious perfection of Deity, and it shines resplendent "in the face of Jesus Christ." It is the right application of knowledge to secure desirable or necessary ends. Sometimes it appears in simply seizing favorable junctures, or turning common incidents as they arise, to our purpose; sometimes in prudently avoiding difficulties; sometimes in the more admirable art of harmonizing opposite extremes and of converting apparently adverse circumstances into the instruments and means of our success. In each of these ways does the wisdom of Deity appear in most perfect development, in the mediation by Christ. We may conceive—for the subject is thus graphically set forth in Scripture—we may conceive the Divine Being inquiring and meditating what he would do on man's revolt. Angels had rebelled and had been given over to hopeless destruction. Yet this had not arrested the course of sin. For now, under temptation it is true, man had transgressed and fallen from his high estate. Must then another race be consigned to remediless woe? Must the great God appear to be foiled by his own creation, in his work? Mercy cries, Spare, oh! spare! But how! How can I spare, and be a Sovereign, and retain dominion over mind and will! Mercy suggests

a ransom. Let "some other able and as willing pay the rigid satisfaction, death for death." But "whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The great problem was to find a substitute who could stand for the guilty, being himself without stain; who should possess such a character that in the estimation of the intelligent universe, the law, by his death in place of the sinner, should not be evaded but magnified; the threatening not be annulled, but honored. In the person of the Son of God this problem is solved. We behold one free from all native and contracted guilt, who, by a wonderful constitution, uniting in himself the Divine and human nature, could perfectly sympathize with each of the parties between whom he was to mediate; while the same fact qualified him to honor the law by the dignity of his person, and to satisfy its claims by suffering its penalty.

In like manner, we notice wonderful contrasts in the work to be performed. There is displayed the greatest hatred of sin and the greatest love to sinners. Infinite compassion executes infinite wrath. The ignominy and death of Christ procure honor, life and happiness, to those for whom he suffered. The aggravated guilt of man's contempt of the Mediator becomes the means of finishing transgression, and will at length destroy the usurped rule of Satan as the God of this world. "Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other." Conflicting attributes are not only harmonized, but it is seen that their combined force more signally and effectually secures the final consummation.

So, also, we might very profitably trace the wisdom of God in leaving so large a part of the world to human devices for 4000 years, thus proving beyond a cavil the weakness of man and the necessity of a Divine revelation, in the previous arrangements, under the ancient economy, for bringing about the advent of Messiah at the fitting juncture; in the condition of the world at the time of its occurrence; the people among whom it took place; the care with which all the singular facts of revelation were attested for the benefit of future ages; and in the choice of opportunities and instruments for its promulgation, by which Divine agency becomes more apparent and incontrovertible. Since the whole transaction was designed to produce a great moral effect upon men, it was so arranged in all its parts as to address itself most powerfully to their understandings and sympathies, their wants and desires, their hopes and fears through the whole range of their being. We see Divine wisdom selecting its field and addressing itself to its noblest work; not simply to create, but new-create; not to subdue chaotic matter, but rebellious mind; not only to vindicate, but to magnify the law; not merely to replace man in the *position from which* he fell, but to raise him to dignity an

felicity far higher than he had lost; to convert the rebel to a child—the heir of pollution unto angelic purity; to foil the adversary in the very moment of anticipated triumph; to add new strength to heaven's massive throne, and new lustre to the crown of heaven's King. All this is done in the cross of Christ. No subject that can engage the thoughts of men or angels displays such consummate wisdom as this; so perfect a conception of the end desired, and knowledge and skill in the choice and adjustment of means. Nor can we doubt that the final issue shall be the theme of lofty praise to holy beings while eternity shall last. It will not be the wonders of the material frame, though worlds and systems that the best instruments of science cannot now descry will then be revealed to their gaze; it will not be the gorgeousness of that New Jerusalem, whose walls garnished with all manner of precious stones, and streets of pure gold, the beloved John so glowingly describes, that will chiefly occupy their powers. Redemption's story, we are told, is still their highest wonder. It is to Him that loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, their ecstasies of love go out. On a higher eminence than we now occupy, commanding a wider survey, and presenting ever varying points of vision; with capacities beyond thought enlarged, and with no solicitations of sense and temptations of Satan to divert or disturb their calm meditations, their knowledge will grow as the days of heaven roll on. And still, upon each fresh discovery of the recources of Divine wisdom manifested in the face of Jesus Christ, their rapt spirits will render the adoring anthem: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

IV. In further illustration of our subject we are naturally led to speak of the testimony the mediation of Christ gives to the POWER and SOVEREIGNTY of God. This appears in enlisting all agencies needful to the work in a full co-operation; in bearing down all obstacles; in removing hindrances, and in securing that there should be no false movement, so to speak, no antagonist able to disconcert his plans, or defeat the predetermined end. In general our minds are more likely, I know, to be impressed with the idea of power, from the observed operations of physical causes upon matter, than from any more recondite influences which spirit may exert over spirit, or even spirit over matter. The appeal in the one case is more immediately to our senses than in the other; and as creatures of sensation we more readily appreciate it. Hence, undoubtedly, one reason for Christ's miracles—direct appeals to the senses of men; so that the proofs of Divine Revelation might be so various as to leave no part of our nature unaddressed, and we might have all the advantage of this accumulated [illegible] to confirm our faith.

Yet it by no means follows that such results are the highest exercise of power. Its seat, its source is still the thinking mind, the sympathetic heart. And the witchery of a tone, a word, an act, a look; the influence of the soul beaming through the countenance, thrilling in the voice, is often more really grand and potential than any application of brute force by which a change of matter is wrought. Immediately or remotely, spirit is the only real, energetic power in the universe. In the beginning, all lay dark and formless and inert, until the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and from the void abyss uprose the beautiful creation. Man was but a clod of earth, until the Spirit breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Now, spiritual power God pre-eminently displays in redemption. To accomplish the fulfilment of his promise, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" to bring about his purpose in the birth and death of Christ, demanded infinite power as well as consummate knowledge. Over the minds of how many different agents, and through how long a period of time did this influence extend; how effective was it in shaping and controlling the volitions and designs of these unnumbered instruments, so that, without impairing his freedom in the least degree, each one was made unconsciously to do whatsoever God's "hand and his counsel determined before to be done." What control, in like manner, over the actors in the final tragedy! What a literal fulfilling of minute and obscure predictions, by both Jews and Roman soldiers, when yet "they thought not so, neither was it in their hearts;" but they simply and freely acted out their own wicked inclinations. How did he make "the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he restrained!" What less than Omnipotence could have raised Christ from the dead—the first fruits of that inconceivably glorious resurrection of all the dead, and their appearance in life and immortal vigor before the throne of God? And what less than a Divine power gives a converting agency to the simple utterance of the truth as it is in Jesus? After many means have been tried, and have failed; where the light of conviction has been long resisted, and indulgence in sensuality and worldliness seems to have closed every avenue to the mind, and so hardened the heart that all would say the case is hopeless, the man never will feel or yield—I say, in these cases of apparently conscience-seared transgressors, what is it that often startles them from their delusions, sets sin in array before their eyes, weighs down the soul with the terrors of the world to come, and makes it realize that none is beyond the grasp of Almighty power, that no sinner can be assured God has not ways of reaching him, or feel that he may sin on with immunity from present woe and future wrath? And what is it, that of such daring rebels often forms "the sons and daughters of the

Lord Almighty;" what, but the mighty power of God applying this doctrine of Christ, and working effectually to renew and to save?

The diffusive influence of the gospel presents another view of God's glorious power in the face of Jesus Christ. It is destined finally to overspread the world; to subvert and root out every other religion, and to banish all those rites which are adverse to God's honor and man's happiness; to make the earth again, in piety to God and in integrity to man, what it was before the building of Babel—of one lip and of one speech. But what ages and what agencies seem requisite to such a consummation. Unbelief exclaims, "If the Lord should open windows in heaven, this thing might be." Infinite power, we know, by a word, in a moment, might accomplish it. But that has not been God's method of procedure, and otherwise, how dreary the prospect. But antagonism, the conflict of light and darkness, and the gradual dispersion of the latter by the silent, steady diffusion of the former, has ever been his method in his spiritual kingdom. And so will it be now. Of old the truth was circumscribed within the narrow boundaries of Judea, and but dimly revealed in types and shadows even there. But at the advent of Messiah, light broke forth upon the world. The wise men, attracted by a new star, inquire, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" With better wisdom and a deeper fervor, they might have asked, Who is he? What his character and the design of his coming? What grand results to man, to God; to heaven, to earth; in time, and through eternity, are shadowed by this strange epiphany? From that moment began the work of demolition and a new erection. The vast fabric of superstition and misery, which, for ages, Satan had been building up, began even then to dissolve. And although, like some icy temple, it may, at times, assume more gorgeous hues, and glow with more resplendent beauty as it melts away, yet will it certainly and utterly vanish under the free air of heaven and the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness. And in its place will succeed a more glorious vision; a scene more transporting shall burst upon the eye of faith;—"the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." What a condition of human things shall exist when this conquest of the Lamb is achieved! Over this entire earth the light of truth shall be displayed, and the influences of purity shall prevail. The victory shall be given to the saints of the Most High God, and they shall go up and possess the land in the length and the breadth of it. Nor is this all; nor is the blessing for this world alone. No! No! We shall be raised from the dust by the power of God. In virtue of Christ's mediation, these bodies shall be revived and re-united to glorified spirits; and in a countless retinue of redeemed ones in

heaven, throughout eternity shall be displayed "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

1. We may learn, in application of our subject, what place the redemption of man holds amidst the varied works of God. It is the last, the brightest and the best. It gives us the most distinct revelation of his disposition. It sets forth the Eternal One to our minds in forms of majesty and grace he nowhere else assumes. God is indeed observed in other departments of his works. His glory is written upon the spreading skies in characters of golden radiance. Yonder orbs floating in boundless space, by their numbers, their wonderful harmony, their unfading light, declare his glory, the firmament showeth his handiwork. So impressive an exhibition do they make, that from them the first, and perhaps the most excusable form of idolatry arose—Sabiism, or the worship of the Host of Heaven. The green earth, outstretching in our sight, sublime or beauteous in its scenery, yielding abundant treasures for our enjoyment, is an object of ineffable grandeur; and though under a curse for man's sake, speaks forth the praise of the Creator still. The living tribes that roam its surface, that float in air or sea in countless numbers, join the general chorus to Him whose hand hath made and fashioned all these things. Not a creature he has made, which does not attest the perfections of that Being who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working; and man, the noblest, most of all. Yet this is a tribute paid to him as the source of physical life and enjoyment. It regards not his moral glory, which evermore excels, and which appears pre-eminent in the person and work of Christ. Those forms of glory are to change and fade; this will survive and brighten through eternal years. The skies shall wax old, and the earth shall decay and die; and their divine characteristics will disappear so that no intelligent spectator will behold and adore. But the history of salvation by Christ will continue the grand subject of interest and attraction in heaven, as long as God and heaven shall last. Our enlarged minds will become more and more interested in its unfolding glories. We shall take in hand the ample volume of the Creator's works, and occupy our thoughts in scanning its wonders. And as we turn from page to page, it will be our high delight to see God in Christ; to read of redemption in its beginnings, its progress, its completion. We shall think how its influence spread with silent power over the face of the globe, to meliorate its rugged features, and bring back its rebellious inhabitants to God's sceptre and his love. We shall see the trophies of grace all around us. We shall hear, we shall join the song that shall roll through heaven's high arches: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

Finally, we may deduce from our subject the proper topic

and the great end of the gospel ministry.* It is so set forth "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Paul is speaking in the context of preachers of the gospel; and in so doing, furnishes one of the most impressive exhibitions of ministerial duty and responsibility to be found even in the writings of the apostle of the Gentiles himself. The same sentiments are elsewhere frequently brought into view. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses;"—this was the gospel according to Paul; and on this basis, to "beseech men to be reconciled unto God," this was his, and is our appropriate and special work. "God forbid," he exclaims, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are to preach, not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; with such repetition of the wondrous theme, that the people shall not be allowed to lose it from their thoughts amidst the distracting cares and alluring pleasures of the world; and with such plainness and affection that they must understand its meaning and feel its force. Nor need we fear that the subject will become insipid, or that men's minds will weary of ministrations chiefly or wholly occupied with these matters. For besides the immense importance of the subjects themselves, which must ever make them interesting to sober and intelligent hearers, if only presented with evident sincerity and an ordinary share of address; there will be found within the lively oracles a copiousness and variety of matter, a fund of pertinent and beautiful illustrations, which the most original mind and glowing fancy can never exhaust. Experience, moreover, has abundantly proved that these truths, from their adaptation to our inward life and most urgent wants, will bear repetition so as no other subject of human interest or research will do, without satiety; and that those services are felt to be most in accordance with the great purposes of preaching, and that ministry is, in the end, most honored and most successful, which is made up mainly of a full, clear and faithful presentation of the elemental doctrines of the gospel. Intelligent worldly men quickly perceive that a minister mistakes his calling, who appears ever intent to escape beyond the limits of his commission into the regions of speculation or fancy; who seems to consider that some novel theory about Bible doctrine, some frostwork of fancy to amuse the imagination, cold as beautiful, will most interest his auditors and best subserve the ends of his ministry. His ministry, it may. But then he surely has other views than those Paul entertained; and the people are little likely to be nourished and built up on most holy faith by his lucubrations. No! brethren of the ministry, let us never forget that whatever might befit learned professors, or men of purely literary pursuits, it is our business to preach Jesus Christ and

* *This sermon was preached at the installation of Rev. H. M. Field as pastor of the First church in West Springfield, Mass., Jan. 30th, 1851.*

him crucified,—the less encumbered by theories and speculations, the more simply and directly, the better. This has ever been the true glory of the gospel ministry ; this, in all ages, has given it all its respectability, its real vitality, and its moral power. When the gospel was almost lost amidst the rubbish of Papal superstition, a recurrence to the cardinal truths embraced in this phrase, and a soul-felt and soul-stirring enforcement of them, was the means, under God, of giving new life and power to his cause. This it was, which gave to Luther and Calvin and the rest of the Reformers their energy and their victory. They felt, when preaching Christ, that they had in hand an instrument neither beneath their power to employ, nor incongruous to the work of pulling down strongholds. These doctrines, plainly, earnestly preached, gave Whitefield that success, which else not all the magic of his surpassing eloquence would have obtained. The same system of truth made Edwards so mighty in word and in doctrine, and became the operating cause of the Great Awakening in his day ; it has been the means of rousing the slumbering energies of the Church to take hold on God's strength, when in any particular place he has been about to appear and build up Zion ; it has been the life and soul of all genuine revivals of religion that have so often blessed our land. And, brethren, when we mourn, as now, the painful dearth of Divine influences in the Church, may we not believe that the cause, in part at least, lies here : that we have somewhat forsaken the old paths ;—that a muffling of the truth in soft phrases, or presenting it in grotesque methods, or a disposition in some measure to accommodate the gospel to the preconceptions of a philosophizing spirit, that it may be more acceptable to the prejudices of the carnal heart, has something to do with this result? Is there not room, at least, for the inquiry? And is there not reason why we should return to the methods which we know God has owned ; to a more simple and free and fearless declaration of those truths we know he has, in times past, so signally blessed ? To this new pastor, and the younger brethren present, the subject has a peculiar interest. For the character of their ministry as an evangelical ordinance and the success of their labors will doubtless depend upon their practice in regard to the subjects and the mode of their preaching. Let them, let us all strive to catch Paul's fervor on these high themes, to imitate his example in setting forth Christ as "the power of God and the wisdom of God." And then why may we not hope to see a day of revived zeal and orderly progress? Why may not all these regions be vocal, as once, with the sounds of rejoicing and salvation? Why may not the land bloom with the beauty and fertility of spring after the desolation of winter? Why may we not hear from all parts of the earth, the shout that shall usher in a day of millennial glory, "*Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people.*" Amen.

SERMON DXLIII.

BY REV. J. MANNING SHERWOOD, NEW-YORK.

THE GOSPEL A SAVOR OF LIFE OR OF DEATH.*

"And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."—JOHN 9: 39.

The gospel we preach is life or death—salvation or enhanced perdition to all who come within the scope of its influence. As a system of moral truths and influences, designed and fitted to accomplish a stupendous moral result, the gospel is never nugatory; it makes its impression; its mission is made to honor its Author in the line of mercy or of wrath. Every person that hears the gospel is made wise by it unto salvation, or is plunged into deeper spiritual darkness—is converted, sanctified, and finally elevated by it to the felicity and glory of heaven, or he is confirmed in his wickedness, and thrust down into a deeper hell.

Here is a fact, a startling and momentous fact, for us to ponder who preach the gospel, and for you to ponder who hear it.

Christ came into this world expressly to *save* sinners. He has done all that is necessary to bring about so blessed a result. He has taught the world the way of life. He has made an all-sufficient atonement for sin. He has established the preaching of the gospel, and whatever other means are necessary to bring sinners to repentance. He has sent the Holy Spirit into the world, and removed the last obstacle out of the way, and done all that can be done to secure the gracious end for which he came into the world and died upon the cross. And now he leaves that system of truths, agencies, and influences, to operate in the world and work out its amazing results, according to the fixed principles of God's government and the laws of the human constitution. And there is no power beneath the throne of the Eternal that can arrest the workings of this moral system, or prevent its achieving for each one of all the millions upon whom it acts a destiny of fearful interest and magnitude.

It is to the simple *fact* involved in this matter that Christ refers in my text. His coming into the world is as really for judgment to those who reject him as it is for mercy to those who receive him. The mission and death of Christ in behalf of sinners; the revelation of God's will contained in the Bible; the institution and operation of the means of grace; and the put-

* It is due to the Editor to say that he very reluctantly consents to the publication of this discourse, at our particular request.—PUBLISHER Nat. Pr.

ting forth of those spiritual and providential influences with which God pursues men in this life, as a matter of fact, are as certain to result in the enhanced guilt and ruin of some, as they are in the salvation and final blessedness of others. This is the natural and necessary result of Christ's coming into the world, and of the preaching of the gospel. And these results will follow wherever the gospel goes. It will prove a savor of death unto death in every case where it fails to prove a savor of life unto life.

There prevails a sad and often fatal delusion just on this point. Thousands cherish and act on the notion that they can have to do or not to do with the gospel, just as they please; that it is optional with themselves whether the gospel shall influence their course and effect their destiny or not; that if they choose they can think and live, and die, and exist hereafter, just the same as if Christ had not come into the world, and there were no gospel to claim their faith and obedience. They are independent of the gospel; they hold their understanding, their affections, their character, their actions, their destiny in their own hands, and they'll believe what they please, and shape their own course, and control their own being, and work out their own plans and wishes, and nothing shall hinder them. But this is a mistake. It is a moral *impossibility*, since Christ has come into the world, to get beyond the scope or to resist the power of his mission. His coming into the world to save sinners is the foundation-fact of your probationary being—the foundation fact of all God's present dealings with you—the foundation-fact of all the agencies and influences that are operating to form your character and determine your destiny for the coming world. The mission of Christ is therefore necessarily influential upon every soul of man for good or for evil—for life or for death eternal. You are shut up to faith in the gospel—salvation from sin and death by the cross of Christ, or you must take the fearful penalty due to those who despise the amazing grace of God the Saviour. It is not possible for you to breathe, or think, or act out of that sphere which the gospel of Jesus Christ permeates in every line of thought and influence, character and destiny, and in which its power as a moulding and controlling moral force is supreme and universal.

Men may disbelieve and reject the gospel; they may shut their eyes to keep out its penetrating light; they may harden their hearts against its influence, and thereby escape conviction and a troubled conscience. They are at liberty to do this. But will this suffice to deliver you out of the hands of Jesus Christ? suffice to leave you as free to work out the great problem of life as if this were not a gospel world? suffice to save you from that accumulated and overwhelming weight of *guilt and wrath which is* threatened against the unsaved? Will *there be no advancement* in the line of depravity; no enhancing

of guilt; no increase of moral distance from God; no treasuring up of wrath and the worst elements of future retribution and misery, as the consequence of resisting and overcoming the entire system of grace? The fact is—and it is one that ought to weigh on us all and never be out of mind—that the gospel is as influential upon those who perish under it, as it is upon those who are saved by it; as influential in the line of spiritual development and moral character; as influential in working out the problem of life, and upon all the great questions at issue at the bar of God. The gospel acts as really, as universally, and as effectually upon the one class as upon the other; and it achieves results as stupendous and as lasting. It only operates in different directions, and secures results opposite one to the other. While the gospel is light to the saved, it is moral darkness to the lost. While it imparts life to the believer it plunges into a deeper death the unbeliever. While it attracts and assimilates to God the soul that it renews and sanctifies, it repels and drives to the utmost boundary of spiritual alienation those who resist it, and makes them tenfold more the children of the Devil.

This is manifestly the doctrine of Christ as he speaks in the text: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." It was not the *object* of Christ's coming into the world to blind and ruin sinners; this result is wholly incidental. Nor is the gospel of *necessity* a blinding and ruining power to any man; it becomes such only when it is resisted and perverted. Judgment is not used in the text then in the sense of condemnation, for Christ expressly declares elsewhere that he came not to condemn sinners. He speaks simply of the effects or results of his coming into the world. He came from God to teach the way of life and to die for sinners, and as the result of his coming some will welcome the truth and be saved, while others, refusing the light of his teaching, and rejecting the benefits of his mediation, will be made more blind and wicked than they would otherwise have been, and so will perish under aggravated condemnation.

The coming of Christ, therefore, and the preaching of the gospel, are simply the *occasion*, not the responsible cause, of the enhanced blindness and damnation of those who finally perish. God forbid that the gospel should be blamed or held responsible for a result so fatal and appalling. The gospel is honestly meant to save men. It is wisely adapted to this end. It is preached and made powerful to accomplish it. And every sinner who is taught the gospel would be saved by it if he did not resist; salvation would be the uniform and blessed effect and fruit of the gospel, did it every where act on willing and obedient hearts. God never influences sinners contrary to the truth; *he never puts forth* an influence to harden their hearts and blind

their eyes against the truth. Sinners *are* blinded and hardened by means of the gospel; but the fault is theirs, not God's, not the truth's—theirs, and God holds them responsible for a result so much against the design and spirit and nature of the system of salvation. It is altogether owing to the perversity of their hearts and their active resistance to the truth, that any sinners perish under the gospel. They must therefore take the consequences. Such is the gospel—such the nature of all moral influence—and such are the laws of our being, that if a remedial measure, like that of redemption, fail of its end through the wicked and obstinate resistance of those who are the subjects of it, it will serve greatly to aggravate the evil and sin it was designed to cure.

And there is no avoiding this terrible consequence. The process and the result upon the lost in the line of darkness and enhanced perdition, are as natural, as legitimate, and morally inevitable as the opposite process and result upon the saved, in the line of light, glory, and blessedness. God will not interfere to counteract the legitimate tendencies, or to defeat the legitimate results of those moral truths, instruments, and agencies which he is employing for the salvation of men. The gospel wields a mighty agency and influence wherever it goes, and achieves the most important result on the character and destiny of all who come under the sway of its power; but the responsibility of determining the character of the result produced is wholly man's. He may convert the entire influence and agency of the gospel upon him into a *blinding* and *hardening* power, and a means of ruin and wrath. If he will hate and shun the light, God will not interfere to ward off that moral blindness which is the certain effect of truth resisted. If he will neglect so great a salvation as the gospel offers, God will not step in between him and that enhanced perdition which is the necessary consequence. Men are treated as free and accountable beings under the gospel. They are bound to receive and obey it. They are not at liberty to neglect it, and forego the blessings it offers. It lays upon them a tremendous responsibility which they cannot shuffle off or evade. They cannot fail of life under it without incurring the guilt of eternal ruin.

We have time to note but three of the fatal tendencies of the gospel upon those who reject it.

1. The first is in the line of MORAL INSENSIBILITY. When a sick man is past feeling, or has lost the power of consciousness, the physician begins to despair. So when sinners come to be insensible under the affecting exhibitions of truth; when the gospel has lost its power to rouse their moral feelings, and sin binds the heart with its icy fetters, they are nigh to perdition. And this moral lethargy is induced, sooner or later, upon all who *habitually resist the gospel* of Jesus Christ. It is a common *and legitimate effect* of continued violence offered to the truth

and to our own moral nature. Man is a creature of amazing sensibilities, and powerful feelings; and the gospel is adapted to work upon these; and they *must* be moved or he will never repent. The gospel comes down to him warm with the love of that infinite heart which pities and seeks to save him; but he repels its tender appeals, its affecting motives, its subduing influences. He meets all that is moving and melting in the gospel in the spirit of opposition. He stifles his feelings, overcomes his convictions, and blunts the edge of truth. And he repeats this many times, till he comes at length to hear the gospel with perfect indifference, if not with positive aversion.

Is it not a *fact*, over which thousands of pastors have mourned, that sinners who grow old in our sanctuaries, in resisting the gospel, become *more and more insensible* under the preaching of the Word? Sermons that moved them once, move them no longer. Years ago, under the power of a special appeal, or by the affecting scenes of a revival, they could be made to show some signs of life. But what appeal touches them now? What scene has interest enough to melt their stubborn heart? You may lift up your voice and cry to them never so earnestly, but they do not hear you. You may preach to them in words that burn with emotion, but they rebound from their heart as if it were a wall of adamant. You may lay hold of them with the truth to pull them out of the fire, but their only response will be, "A little more sleep—time enough yet."

Now the gospel has been "a savor of death unto death" to such. They have passed through a process which leaves their spiritual nature blasted, and the gospel nothing to act upon that has hope or life in it. They have arrived at that point where they can breast the whole mighty tide of redeeming influences without emotion and without effort.

The very *heathen* show sensibility in matters of religion. The dim light of nature alarms their fears. They are anxious concerning the future. They perform the rites of their false faith often with affecting interest and solicitude.—The very "*devils*," we are told, "believe and tremble." They cannot be stupid or indifferent in view of what God is, and in view of what he is doing in this world of ours to save sinners. But in the sanctuaries of this gospel world, how many sinners are there this day who are stupid and dead! The gospel fails to impress them with the solemnity of its affecting discoveries; it fails to awaken in them the desire to be saved; it fails to convince them of sin and their need of Christ; it fails to secure any heartfelt interest in the matter of their own eternal destiny. They are just as much at their ease as if no gospel were sounding its message of life in their ears. With the Bible unfolding the wondrous system of mercy; with the gospel urging *its powerful* appeals upon reason, feeling and faith; with *all the means* which minister to salvation doing their utmost

upon them: with the Holy Spirit striving; with all the monitions of providence which a suffering and a dying world can furnish; with heaven inviting, and hell alarming, and the bar of God confronting the soul, they are yet *insensible*. Fear has no power to alarm, love none to melt, truth none to sway. Heaven weeps for them, but their eyes are never moistened. Pious hearts feel for them, but they are indifferent. The whole amazing system of mercy is active, working its mighty agencies upon them, but it fails to rouse them from the sleep of sin. Oh! it is affecting to contemplate this result of the gospel—to see those who ought to be made alive by it to God, plunged into a profounder, nay, a hopeless insensibility. And yet this is the certain tendency of the gospel upon all who do not obey it. Though appalling, the thing is inevitable. There is no sinning against the gospel and escaping this evil. This deadening process is going on in your soul continually, so long as you resist, and you cannot hinder it. It will *ruin* you in spite of all God's mercies—in spite of all the gospel's saving influences—in spite of all that man can do to prevent it, unless you master this habit of insensibility, and rouse yourself from the lethargy of sin. You must open your eyes and look at the truth, or total blindness will be the effect; open your ears and hear the gospel message, or soon you will be past hearing; open your heart and let your feelings be touched and exercised, or quickly the power to feel will be gone.

II. A second tendency of the gospel, when rejected, is to a FEARFUL AUGMENTATION OF GUILT. The system of mercy which God has introduced into this world, lays upon mankind a new and most weighty responsibility. It makes a new and affecting discovery of the Divine perfections. It gives a new and powerful sanction to the law of eternal rectitude. It urges obedience by new motives of a most interesting and forcible character. It sheds new light on man's future destiny; and brings all the moral force of love, mercy and grace to recover man to God. It is throughout a system of *mercy*, under which, on the ground of Christ's mediation, grace is shown to the guilty. God lays aside the sternness of offended *majesty*, and putting on the compassion of the *Father*, comes down to man in the gospel, and solicits his love. He stays the execution of the law's stern penalty, and tries the power of love, and all the winning attractions of Incarnate Mercy, and the strivings of the Spirit of all grace, to save if possible his erring children.

The gospel, you perceive, then, moulds and gives tone and direction to all God's dealings with men, both governmental and providential. It hence effects a radical change in our relations to God, in all the actions we put forth in those relations, and in the matter of moral character and eternal destiny resulting therefrom. Our relations to God are not

merely the relations of subjects to a sovereign; but also the relations of creatures to an unparalleled Benefactor—of perishing sinners to a provided and offered Saviour. A life of sin in us is, therefore, not simply a life of transgression against sovereign authority, but a course of infinite ingratitude towards a Father's love and a Saviour's death. Guilt must therefore be measured, not only by the justice and claims of God's laws sinned against, but by the light, and mercy, and privilege of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is a fact of great interest and significance that we *live under the gospel.* We have grown up and received our education under its genial instruction and influences. Our views of truth and duty, our moral feelings, our whole spiritual being, have been moulded and developed under the gospel. All our actions, therefore, and our entire moral character, take their impression from the gospel. The gospel has brought us all into a state and condition peculiar, and devolves upon us immense obligations. It gives us a character possessed by no other beings. It will achieve for each a destiny unlike the destiny of any other part of God's rational creation.

You perceive, then, that sin, under a system so benignant and gracious, is more inexcusable, more atrocious and odious, and carries with it a sorer condemnation, than sin under mere law. Sin on *earth*, where the gospel reigns, is tenfold more sinful and ruining than was sin in *heaven*, when the angels rebelled —than is sin in *hell*, where the beams of divine love and mercy have never fallen. A character matured in rebellion and depravity, under the light and in spite of the pleadings and influences of the gospel, possesses elements and degrees of moral turpitude and hatefulness to be found nowhere else. Living as you do under the highest and best of all God's dispensations, your impenitence and disobedience have not a parallel in the universe. Your guilt is enhanced beyond the power of language to express. Against your ungrateful and sinful life, not only does a violated law thunder its anathemas, but the love of an incarnate Saviour, and the cross of suffering mercy, plead and protest. Every step you advance towards perdition is achieved by overcoming the many obstacles with which Heaven has obstructed the path of sin; by breaking through all those restraints which law and grace have united to impose on transgression; by resisting all of motive and of saving efficacy there is in God's stupendous system of redemption. Here under the full sweep of the Cross you live, and act, and sin, and pass away to your final destiny.

Your rejection of the gospel does not affect one of the *facts* embraced in the system, nor change your relations to it, nor prevent its influence upon you. Your life will be measured, in its duties, in its sins of omission and commission, in its spirit *and moral results*, by the gospel which you enjoy but to neg-

lect and abuse. A moral necessity is thus laid upon you. You are shut up to the Gospel, and you cannot get away from its power. It is down upon you with the tremendous weight of its obligations, with the infinite pressure of its motives and influences, wherever you go, in every volition and act of life. You can do nothing to arrest the workings of that system upon you with which God has put you in contact. You are every moment exposed to the full sweep of its mighty power. And the destiny which it is working out for you, will be one that shall honor its agency and bring glory to God, whether it be life or death. You may shut your eyes and remain blind, but the glorious gospel will shine on. You may turn a deaf ear and refuse to hear, but the sublime message of life will still be announced. You may harden your heart and resist, but mercy will plead on, and grace flow down to you, and judgment be restrained, and the work of destiny go on to its completion. And then for the consequences! The gospel of life will have exerted upon you the power of a fearful moral death. Your resistance to it and ruin under it, will not only have vastly increased the power of sin over you, and destroyed your moral susceptibilities, but enhanced your guilt as a sinner immeasurably. Hear what Christ himself says on this point: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin." "This is the condemnation, that they have not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." That is, the guilt of rejecting the teaching and the salvation of *Jesus Christ* is so enormous in the sight of God, as to overshadow all other forms of guilt, and to stand forth alone to view in its unparalleled and supreme turpitude, challenging Omnipotent wrath.

III. Finally. A rejected gospel will ENHANCE THE ETERNAL RUIN of those who perish under it. As guilt is in proportion to the knowledge, mercy, and opportunity sinned against, so future condemnation and punishment will be measured by the same law. Just as high, therefore, as the gospel elevates sinful men above sinful angels, as it respects the means and opportunities of spiritual life, just so much lower than they will it be the occasion of plunging in everlasting shame and ruin those who perish under it.

We shall be judged at the bar of Jesus Christ according to a standard essentially different from that by which the heathen, and fallen angels will be tried. They will be judged on the ground of law, according to the measure of light given them. But sinners who perish from gospel lands will be judged and condemned on the ground of mercy as well as of law. Their guilt will be measured by the superior light and dispensation which they enjoyed—by the love and services of Christ to save them—by the greatness of the salvation offered to and rejected by them. *The Judge himself will* be the merciful One who died to save *them—who offered them* pardon and life—who had done all

that infinite love and power could do to save them from death, and they would not be saved. Even Jesus therefore will be constrained to pronounce sentence against such sinners. Mercy herself will witness against them. Not a voice will dare to plead their cause. And the assembled universe will be amazed at the spectacle of the Lamb of God pronouncing the doom of eternal perdition against beings for whose salvation he made the mighty circuit of the earth and the cross!

But the *retrospect* of such as perish thus! When the mists of earth shall all have cleared away, and the clear, calm light of eternity comes to settle down upon the soul; when time and probation are no more; and the judgment has settled all; and hope and mercy have retired, and the pressure of eternal doom is felt, oh! what shall be the reflections, the remorse, the self-upbraidings, the misery, of those who once had the gospel offer made to them, and who might have been saved and made for ever happy in heaven, had they only yielded to that system of grace which they stoutly resisted here on earth! Alas! the picture is too appalling to look upon. Merciful God! what shall the realization of it be?

How fearful is the RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL WHO HEAR THE GOSPEL. The gospel never fails to do its appointed and appropriate work. It wields a supreme influence over every soul that it addresses. It is *meant* to bless you; it is fitted, it seeks to save you. But despise its instructions, refuse its offers, resist its influences, and there is no power in the universe able to prevent a result infinitely disastrous. You turn the very grace of God against you. You arm the Cross with thunders more awful than those of Sinai; you pluck down upon your soul a ruin enhanced by the utmost guilt.

And you cannot avoid this result, unless you repent. Christ has come for judgment as well as for mercy. Christ has died for you; Christ offers to save you; the whole mighty system of mercy is in motion to bring you to obedience. And you cannot alter these facts. You cannot turn them away from your hearts and lives. Influence you they must; decide your destiny they will, in spite of you. *You must be saved by the gospel, or damned under it!* You must reach heaven from the Cross, or it will plunge you into a deeper ruin. If you will not avail yourself of the benefits of Christ's services in your behalf, you must take the terrible consequences which inevitably follow.

There is no guilt in the universe to be compared with the guilt of rejecting the Son of God. There is no misery, no ruin to be compared with the misery and the ruin of sinners who perish from the sanctuaries of this gospel world. Better far that you had never been born—better that Christ had never undertaken to save you—better that you had never enjoyed the light and *mercy of the gospel*, than that you should live and die in *such a land as this*, a rejecter of salvation.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 4, Vol. XXV.] APRIL, 1851. [Whole No. 292.

SERMON DXLIV.

BY REV. A. T. CHESTER, D. D., BUFFALO, N. Y.

THE SINNER DEAD UNTO GOD.

"And you *hath he quickened* who were dead in trespasses and sins."—EPH. 2 : 1.

THE words, *hath he quickened*, not in the original, but supplied in the English version, are necessary to complete the sense, and plainly implied in the context. The verse, without these words, is a description of the condition of all who are not the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom. In declaring that Christians, now quickened by the grace of God, were dead before this change,—dead in trespasses and sins,—we are to understand the apostle as describing the situation of all who are not renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost. The impenitent sinner is dead. This is the uniform language of the Scriptures. "He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

This death in trespasses and sins is sometimes understood as referring to the extreme sinfulness of the unregenerate man; or, to the entire loss of God's favor; or, to the condemnation which is already pronounced against the ungodly, the fearful issue of which is the second death. Yet is there ever a difficulty in discussing this subject. However simple and forcible the explanations of this figurative language, what encouragement is there in the attempt to convince the dead that they are dead, or to show the dead in what sense they are dead? These various definitions of the death of the impenitent are not comprehended. They seem rather speculative dogmas, or theologi-

cal doctrines, than practical truths. Another way may be adopted, and seems demanded, to justify this language of the Word of God in which sinners are said to be dead. The method now proposed is by a simple analogy with temporal death.

As a description rather than a definition of death, it may be said that it is an interruption of all harmony between the objects of sense and sensation, or perception. Let the eye of one from whom life has just departed be opened upon the most enchanting scene of beauty, let the light stream in from a thousand points of attraction in the clouds above, and the foliage and the flowers beneath, and yet there is no sensation, no delight. Why? The organ is complete. Here are all the lenses and mirrors necessary to perfect vision. This is just like the eye of him, who, by the side of the dead body, is filled with admiration of the scene. The beautiful landscape stands forth in all its charms. The light is performing its rapid journey from its source to each object of interest, and from each object to the eye,—the eye is complete in its organization, just as well adapted to vision as the eye of the living, and yet there is no sensation, no perception. This is death. The harmony between the objects of sense and sensation was broken up when life left the body.

The funeral-dirge at the burial of the honored dead may move the living to tears by its plaintive harmony; but he whose death has called out these strains of lamentation hears them not. His ear may be perfect, a complete arrangement for hearing, but the harmony between sound and hearing is broken up by death.

The air may be laden with the sweet breath of flowers, and yet no effect is produced by the fragrance upon him who is sleeping in death. The harmony between outward things and the enjoyments of sense is at an end. This is what the wise man means when he says, "But the dead know not anything."

Now the death which the Scriptures affirm of all the impenitent is made manifest in just the same way. There is an entire want of harmony between God and their souls. They have animal life, mental energy, and the natural affections, just as the dead man has the organs of sense; but as these organs do not respond to the influences exerted upon them by light, and sound, and color, so the mind and the affections of the sinner do not answer to the calls and claims of God,—the harmony that should ever exist between a creature and its Creator is broken up, and in this sense the sinner is dead.

Let us notice this want of harmony in a few particulars.

I. *The knowledge of the existence and presence of God does not produce reverence.*

No man can regard the existence of an exalted fellow-creature —of one who is distinguished for his knowledge, his benevolence, his bravery, or his great success—without a feeling of venera-

tion. It is the spontaneous tribute to human greatness. And when there is true moral excellence, goodness as well as greatness, it is impossible to refuse the homage of the soul. If we are brought into the immediate presence of those who are thus exalted in station and irreproachable in character, there is ever an involuntary feeling of reverence excited. No one can stand at the tomb of Washington, or in the audience of a banished king, without offering such a tribute to greatness, unless first every sensibility be dead within him.

The sinner, unless an utter atheist, believes that there is a God, though he cannot see him any more than he can see the forms of the illustrious dead, whose history fills his mind with awe. He believes that God is every where present; he cannot deny this unless he deny the existence of God altogether. He is ever standing before this great Jehovah, and yet he has not a feeling of reverence on this account. How can he prevent it? In every other case reverence follows the recognition of an exalted being; here is the most glorious Being in the universe, whose presence is acknowledged, and yet no feeling of veneration, no deep emotion of the soul is manifest. What can be the solution? There may be the eye, and the light, and the object of vision, but if life be wanting there can be no sensation, no perception. Here are knowledge, belief, an acknowledgment of the truth; God is present, and this is perceived intellectually, but there is no corresponding emotion of soul, no reverence. Is not this the only explanation?—the sinner is dead unto God!

II. *The abundant favors of God do not awaken gratitude.*

That these favors are abundant every sinner knows, and is often ready to admit. There is not a man so insensible as not to perceive that for the continuance of life and health he is indebted to God. When the light of the blessed sun shines upon him on the return of a summer morning; when the refreshing showers descend upon his fields, he knows, he will not deny, that the living God bestows these rich gifts. When the intellect is in exercise, he perceives and acknowledges his indebtedness to God for every good thing. Gratitude is a common, a natural emotion for favors received. We cannot choose but feel it. It springs up spontaneously in the human soul. If in some cases it seem to be wanting when there is occasion for it, then the reproach with which the ungrateful are visited, is proof that gratitude is expected, and is considered essential to the healthful action of the soul. You hear that some one is making strong exertions in your behalf,—you receive an uninterrupted succession of favors from some one who is under no obligation to treat you with peculiar kindness; it would be thought very strange if you should not be affected by such manifestation of favor, if you should not make the usual exhibitions of gratitude. You would

wonder at yourself if you did not discover a glowing of the heart towards such a benefactor, and a desire to please him in every possible manner.

And yet the fact is, that with so much to excite it, the unrenewed man does not feel any gratitude towards God. He may suppose that he does. There may be a feeling of satisfaction when he is enjoying the comforts of life, a kind of contentment with the allotment of Providence because it is so favorable to him; this he mistakes for gratitude. Nothing is more common than to hear such persons say not merely that they are grateful, but that they really love God, their Benefactor. But gratitude is not language. It is feeling, and feeling must show itself if it really exist; and while the impenitent sinner refuses to obey God in the simplest requirement, and continues to reject Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, who is sent to be his Saviour,—while he has a spirit of rebellion, most manifest whenever he is tried by affliction, it is evident, whatever he may say of himself, or think of himself, that he has no gratitude towards God. Why not? Why should there not be here, as in other cases, an answer of the heart to manifest kindness? There may be the ear, complete in its arrangement for hearing, and the air may be stirred with the loudest sounds or the sweetest notes of music, but if life be wanting, there can be no sensation, no perception. Here are favors abundant, the enjoyment of these favors, a heart that can be awakened to gratitude towards other benefactors, but there is no gratitude for heavenly blessings. Is not this the only explanation?—the sinner is dead unto God!

III. *The love and compassion of God do not produce love.*

This is common among men. "Love is the lover for love." Let it be perceived that others are bestowing upon us the warmth of their affection, and we cannot withhold an answering emotion. The heart that is chilled by death answers not, although the sorrowing mourners weep around the grave; but the heart of the living is most easily moved by such evidences of love. This is seen not only among the sensitive, the susceptible, who cherish the tenderer emotions, but also among the stern and the savage. He that cannot be subdued by force or by chains, becomes a child beneath the appeal of love and tenderness—amid the evidences of love for him. When love exhibits itself in the form of compassion, and we are the objects of undeserved affection—when those whom we have injured love us, and strive to bless us, it is not in our nature to be insensible to such an influence. The hardest heart will melt before it.

Where is there such love and compassion as God exhibits toward us? We are poor, wretched sinners. We deserve his displeasure. His law, which we have broken, condemns all transgression, and the dreadful penalty of sin is eternal death.

Yet such is his compassion that he provides a way of salvation. His love originates the scheme of redemption. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The display of the love of Christ is the most wonderful the world has ever seen. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But God commendeth (magnifieth) his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Here is the simple truth, so full of meaning: God, in the person of his Son, gave his precious life for the salvation of the lost! And what do the impenitent care about it? The man who has plunged into the flood to save you from drowning, you love while you live; but this Jesus, who has indeed given his life to save you from eternal destruction, has no place in your heart. It is evident that this is the truth, for it is the very essence of the sin of impenitence that Christ is rejected as the Saviour. How can this be? Here are infinite compassion and love appealing to a heart that can be moved by other appeals for answering affection, and yet it stirs not now. Is it not because the sinner is dead unto God?

IV. *The glory of God does not call forth praise to Him to whom it is due.*

Upon everything around us, the glory of the great Architect is stamped. He has created, and he sustains the rolling worlds in their courses. We praise the astronomer who penetrates the heavens with keenest glance, who investigates the laws of the material universe, and sets forth to our wondering minds the truths of this celestial science; but unto him who made these worlds and established these laws, the careless sinner renders no praise. We bestow deserved commendation upon the composer and performer of a difficult piece of music, especially because amid all the varying sounds, amid the different parts, *the harmony* is preserved, delighting the ear and moving the soul; but the music of nature, the harmony and order ever manifest amid the intricate maze of the movements of the universe, secured by the invisible hand of God, this calls out from the impenitent no praise. The painter who has succeeded in making a tolerable imitation of nature we praise in highest terms for his success; but the great Artist, who has set the copy, whose is the original design—in whose picture the moving cloud, the waving foliage, and the running brook have a charm not to be imparted to the canvas—receives no admiration. We delight to honor those who are already invested with a diadem of glory, whether the monarch's crown, the conqueror's laurel, or the poet's wreath; we are prone to exalt that which is already exalted; but God, who is most glorious of all, who shines forth in creation, in providence, in his nature and his government, with an effulgence that

blinds the heavenly host, receives no praise from the sinner's heart. Why? Need we ask? Here is glory, calculated to make its impression and produce its effect; here is a heart most easily moved by such exhibitions, and yet now not moved at all. Is not the sinner dead unto God.

V. *The teachings of God do not produce faith.*

Mankind are naturally credulous. We are compelled to receive so much upon trust, that we are wisely endowed with a confidence in each other's testimony. We believe what we hear said for truth. In early years we have not judgment to decide between probable truth and manifest falsehood, and thus we receive many erroneous impressions. We learn soon, by painful experience, that deception and falsehood are common among fallen creatures, and that we must be upon our guard in respect to what we hear, or we may be led into fatal error. But for all this, we still go on believing, reposing in faith upon the communications that are made to us, especially when such statements are given by those of good character, and who have suitable facilities for becoming acquainted with the truth. We cannot choose but believe, when one in whom we place confidence as a man of veracity gives us an account of that of which he has been an eye-witness, even though it contain many things contrary to our own experience, and which seem to border on the marvelous.

God teaches mankind in respect to many most important subjects: he speaks in his Word of the sinner's ruin, and of the way of salvation; he gives descriptions of the eternal world and of man's future state; and yet, while the truth of God cannot be questioned, if his existence be admitted, and though it must be acknowledged that he has perfect acquaintance with that of which he speaks, yet in the mind of the sinner there is no such cordial reception of the truth as can be called faith. He can yield himself to the teachings of a parent—to the teachings of an instructor in earthly science—to the testimony of his fellow men; and yet, having all this ability to exercise faith, and having such simple and clear and important truth revealed in the Word of God, he receives it not. Though he may not deny it, he has no such confidence in it, it produces no such impression upon him, exerts no such influence over him, as the declarations of his fellow men. How can we account for this, except by saying, the sinner is dead unto God?

VI. *The warnings of God do not lead to caution, nor his threats to fear, nor his promises to his favor.*

We give heed to the admonition of a fellow-man who assures us that there is evil in a certain course, and we demand it as due upon common principles of benevolence that when any one has become acquainted with a dangerous path he should make it

known, and thus put others upon their guard. If the watchmen upon the walls see the sword coming, and do not give the alarm, the blood of those that perish is required at their hands. But how strange it would be if those who heard the notes of warning should give them no attention. Could any be unconcerned but the sleeping or the dead? So threats usually produce an immediate effect. No one can remain at ease if he knows he has an enemy who has threatened to take his life; and his fear is increased if this enemy be powerful and able to fulfil his designs. On the other hand, promises of good from the rich and powerful are ever the strongest encouragements to seek for the favor which is thus offered. The course which all pursue under the influence of warnings, threatenings, and promises is well known. We can determine beforehand how men will act in view of these.

But all such calculations are set at naught in the sinner's conduct towards his Maker. God gives the most distinct warnings in his Word. He sets before us the dangers that surround us, to many of which, without such divine warning, we might be insensible; tells of approaching death, which may be at any moment but at the remove of a single step; tells of the judgment, that day of trial and of terrible retribution to the ungodly; tells of the world of woe in which the finally impenitent shall dwell forever. He utters these warnings in the most startling language, such as, "Prepare to meet thy God;" and yet the sinner thus in danger, thus warned, gives no heed to it, and rushes on as if he were passing over a smooth and easy road that must surely terminate in eternal joy. Is it not because he is dead unto God? He would heed the warning of a fellow-man.

The sinner is not merely exposed to danger, of which warning is given so that he may have an opportunity of escaping, if escape be possible, but is condemned already—is under the curse, and in this state the most terrible language in the Word of God is used against him. "God shall pour out his fury upon the wicked." "The Lord reserveth wrath for his enemies." "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil." But these threats produce no effect. The impenitent hear God say that he is angry with the wicked every day. They hear the benevolent Saviour say, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and they know that they may die the next hour, and then all the evils of a wretched, hopeless eternity will come upon them; and yet they pay no attention to these threatenings; the ordinary fear that would be produced by the threats of those so much inferior to the Almighty in power to injure or destroy, is not excited within them. How can the sinner bear these threats and be devoid of fear? Why is not every one who is an enemy of God now

trembling in terror in view of his coming wrath? Have we not still the same answer? These sounds are falling upon the ears of those who are dead unto God.

The same is true of his promises. They are most abundant and precious, uttered by One who cannot fail in ability or willingness to do all that he has promised, whose sincerity cannot be questioned; they relate to all the necessities of man, physical and moral, temporal and eternal; and yet they do not induce the sinner to seek the favor of God; they do not prevail to lead him on in the way of the attainment of what is promised. The sinner hears it, the promise of eternal life, "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality"—the promise of salvation to all who believe in the name of the Son of God—the promise of a full supply to all who thirst and who will come to him and drink; and yet he is not moved by these promises, will not take the rich blessings so freely set before him—will not become a partaker of the offered favor of heaven. When neither warnings, alarms, nor threats terrify, nor promises allure, must we not conclude that it is because the sinner is dead unto God?

In all these particulars, and many more that might be named, there is just such an interruption of harmony between cause and effect, as in the case of a dead body amid beauty, or music, or sweet odors. In this respect, every one who is yet unreconciled unto God is dead. This dreadful condition of sinners cannot appear unto us as it does to the spirits above us. They can see the difference between the living and the dead. How strange it must appear to them to see creatures of God thus unaffected by the exhibitions of his presence, and favors, and compassion, and glory, and teachings, and warnings, and threats, and promises. It must seem to them like the banquet of the dead. The ancient Peruvians preserved the bodies of their deceased Incas, or kings, by a skillful method of embalming; and on certain occasions they were brought out, clothed in their princely attire, to preside at a feast. The banquet was served by the menials of the household, and the invited guests partook of the melancholy fare in the presence of the royal phantom, seated at the head of the table, with the same attention to the forms of courtly etiquette as if the living monarch had presided. How hideous such a spectacle! The angels look upon just such scenes all over the earth, the dead among the living, going through with the forms of life, but dead unto God!

Three questions, with their answers, will constitute the application of this discourse.

1st. Is there any propriety in addressing sinners upon such a

subject? Shall we speak to the dead? Yes. Because in other respects the heart, and soul, and mind of the impenitent are alive. This is a death unto God. We may urge even the dead to exert themselves to secure their own salvation. They can see and comprehend their perilous condition; they can at least intellectually admit the justice of these claims of God; they can perceive the fitness and worth of the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ. This death may itself be illustrated by the condition of one oppressed with the dreadful incubus often connected with sleep and frightful dreams, but sometimes occurring in wakefulness—when the victim seems to be in the grasp of an unseen but powerful enemy, and cannot stir, while at the same time he is conscious that a single movement would bring relief. At length, after a painful struggle, a finger is moved, and then the whole arm, and the contest is over. The sinner has upon him the incubus of a depraved heart—the pressure of a world alluring and seductive—a weight of sin bearing him down to hell, and already are the chains of the great adversary of souls thrown around him. He is bound hand and foot, and just about to be cast into outer darkness. He can scarcely stir. But though he cannot lift hand or foot, perhaps the lip, the tongue may move in a prayer for help. Can you not, perishing sinner, call up at least so much interest in your own case as to affect your heart, and inspire the simple prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" This may be the beginning of life. This first effort may be needed, in the arrangement of Divine Providence, to remove the weight of sin from your soul. One such movement, itself excited by the Holy Ghost, may bring light, and peace, and joy, and life in its result; and it may be said of you: "And you *hath he quickened* who was dead in trespasses and sins."

2d. Is not this death an excusable condition? Is there any blame to be attached to it? It is *not* excusable. It is blameworthy. Because the sinner is a suicide; the guilt of self-murder is resting upon each one in this state. The connection of man with fallen Adam, and the providence of God in bringing us into being with depraved hearts, are charged with our guilt, but in vain. As it was said of old to the wandering people of God, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" so now it must be said of all who love sin so well, who have committed sin enough, for which they are alone responsible, to bring upon them all the evils which threaten the ungodly, "O sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself!" It is death that locks up your heart against all the gracious offers and kind appeals of God; it is death that forbids you to hold the communion of a child with your heavenly Father; and, worst of all, it is death that you have brought upon yourself by your own sins.

Must you, then, perish inevitably, with the doom of a self-murderer resting upon you? No; this is not necessary. God has provided a remedy even for this desperate condition. If you have seen the truth upon this subject—if your intellect only is alive to perceive your spiritual death, you will not marvel, but rather rejoice to hear the Great Teacher say, "Ye must be born again." It is life that the sinner needs. The change which must take place to restore the lost to the love and favor of God, is a change from death to life; and therefore the propriety of the language used to describe it is most evident. What should it be called but a new birth—regeneration—a change of heart—being made a new creature? The apostle, in the text, addressing the Ephesian Christians, says: "And you *hath he quickened*," i. e., to you hath he given life, "who were dead in trespasses and sins." This is the work of the Holy Ghost—the work of God in the soul. It is not required that new faculties and powers should be imparted, but only that life should be given to those already possessed, but lying dormant, dead unto God. A dead body, still complete in organization, would only need the infusion of life to be ready at once to use every organ and employ every limb. The impenitent sinner has what is necessary to be employed in loving and serving God, but life is wanting. This can be communicated to the soul only by the same Almighty Spirit that at first breathed into man the breath of life. Over each one restored to the favor of God and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, there is a jubilee in heaven. The angels rejoice over the repenting sinner, and the Father himself meets the prodigal with the warm embrace of infinite love, exclaiming, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

3d. Finally. Does not this exhibit the real difference between the Christian and the sinner?—the one is alive, the other is dead unto God. They may be just alike in other respects, having the same natural endowments of body and soul; having made the same attainments in science and in all matters of worldly advancement; just as the body of a living man may exactly resemble the body of another from which life has just departed. These may appear alike to the careless observer; but yet how great the difference! The one is alive, the other is dead. The Christian is alive, and the sinner is dead unto God. This difference may be made manifest in many ways. Speak in the presence of these two of God and heaven,—the one answers with glowing countenance; the face of the other is rigid, and his tongue still as in the silence of the grave. Propose an act that may glorify God,—the Christian runs with all the vigor of life to perform it; the sinner stands still as if bound with the fetters of death. Tell of the love of Christ,—the one, with

streaming eyes, cries out, "He died for me;" the other is as devoid of emotion as if his very heart were frozen in the sepulchre. Call for a contribution to promote the cause of Christ,—the one answers to the call as a faithful steward of God; the other heeds it no more than if he were as insensible as the gold he grasps so eagerly. It is indeed to be admitted that all who profess Christ are not thus alive at all times, and that some who are not Christians, under the influence of other motives than supreme love of God, do assist in the performance of many Christian duties; but yet the truth remains unshaken by these exceptions,—the Christian is alive, the sinner is dead unto God.

And this is the very distinction that will exist forever in heaven and in hell. It is life to be where God, and Christ, and all the holy dwell. It is life to expand at once to the fullest capacity of our being, in knowledge, and holiness, and joy, and yet to grow continually wiser, and holier, and happier under the light of God's reconciled countenance. It is called eternal life! It is death, the second death, eternal death, to be banished from heaven, shut up in the pit of woe, dying, and yet never to reach the last despairing pain—sinking forever beneath the wrath of an angry God!

"There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath:
Oh what eternal horrors hang
Around the second death!

"Lord God of truth and grace,
Teach us that death to shun,
Lest we be banished from thy face,
And ever more undone."

SERMON DXLV.

BY REV. J. N. GRANGER,

OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

THE JOY OF THE ANGELS.

"I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."—LUKE 15 : 7.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—LUKE 15 : 10.

IT is well sometimes to turn our thoughts to the heavenly world ; and this contemplation is most inviting when it is assisted by persons and facts with which we are familiar. In this delightful employment the doctrine of angels affords us more aid than we are ready at first to acknowledge.

Jesus Christ is, indeed, the grand link which holds our faith to the unseen world. Uniting in his person both the human and the divine—neither God nor man alone, but both God and man in perfect union—we surrender our faith to him. He is our Great High Priest, who hath passed into the heavens. If we had no other aid to faith, we would trust alone in him. Although he is now "far above angels, and principalities, and powers," all whom are now "subject unto him," our faith would follow him to his highest throne. That ascension—that assumption of lawful authority by *our* Saviour, and Friend, and Brother—that glorified human nature which he carried up, far up, to the seat of the divinest glory, which Adam, and Enoch, and Moses, and David, and all the prophets have gazed upon *there*—it is this which makes heaven real to us, and near to hand.

Nevertheless, there are minor aids which we all need, but which, in contrast with this greater one, we are too apt to forget.

Perhaps there are few points of faith upon which Christians of every age and of every sect have been more united than on this : the existence of a higher order of intelligences, beings of exalted wisdom and virtue, whom we call angels. Although we know little of the nature of their influence upon us, or how their agency is employed to promote our happiness, it is not difficult to understand how we are aided by knowing that they stand *between* us and the unapproachable grandeur of the One Being, whom saints and angels adore. Raised above us in power and

virtue, they are yet vastly inferior to the Infinite God. As compared with *men*, they are, indeed, greatly superior to us; so much so, that the apostle John, struck with admiration of the angel who showed to him the glories of the New Jerusalem, forgot, for a moment, that it was only his "fellow-servant" he would worship. But when, on the other hand, they are compared with *God*, they fall infinitely below him—they approach near to us, and man is then "but a little lower than the angels."

The advantage to us of this knowledge is—

I. That it gives distinctness to our thought of the unseen world. It peoples it. From the Scriptures we learn that angels, in their flights through the "void expanse," have sometimes touched and trod our earth. They have been here. Here they have walked and ministered. They have floated in this air. Their voices have been heard in music such as mortals never raise. They have spoken, have instructed, and have passed away. Paul speaks of "an innumerable company of angels;" Luke, of "a multitude of the heavenly host;" Christ, of "twelve legions of angels." And Daniel, in a vision of the Ancient of Days, and of the throne of his glory, beheld "thousand thousands who ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand who stood before him."

2. But it is more to my present purpose to notice another use which the doctrine of angels serves. It is one which is sometimes employed in the Holy Scriptures. The doctrine affords us a point of observation where we may look down to earth and upon ourselves.

Irresistibly we are led to ask how *finite* beings, who are wiser and holier than we are, regard us, and regard our choices. We take, in imagination, the position which they occupy, and we judge ourselves in their stead. Nor is there anything irreverent towards God in this. It is but the conduct of children, all dutiful, all affectionate, towards a parent, who sometimes take counsel of each other, the younger of the older, while all alike rejoice in a parent's smile, and own a parent's law.

It is for this purpose, as it seems to me, that our Saviour employs the touching words of the text. The Pharisees, who despised the penitent sinner, and who despised him the more because he *was* penitent, were referred to the different estimates which the angels of God put on such a character, and to the feelings with which they regard his conversion. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." It is from this high point of observation, that we are invited to view the stupendous change which is effected in a sinner's return to God. We are thus guarded against any low views and mean opinions of a moral act like this. The in

terest which these high intelligences have in it, dignifies it in the eyes of men, and rebukes their scorn.

It cannot be difficult, nor need it be unprofitable, to pursue this thought. The statement of fact, which Christ has made, justifies this use of his language. At the same time, it limits the subject, and guards us against all uncertain and unprofitable speculation.

The Jews had a saying, that "the angels weep whenever a Hebrew sins." Whether our Lord had this saying in mind or not, we have no means of knowing. It is, however, certain that it is in fine contrast with the language he has himself employed. If angels *weep* whenever a *Hebrew* sins, they rejoice with singing when a sinner, whoever he may be, Publican, Pharisee, or Gentile, repents; yea, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. The Pharisees held that a genuine Hebrew rarely transgressed the law of God, and that when he did the angels wept in sorrow as at a brother's fall. Christ passes at once above all that is false in the thought. He rejects whatever is narrow and selfish, and all that is falsely sentimental. He teaches that these pure and benevolent beings not only take the liveliest interest in our welfare, *but that they are in perfect sympathy with his principles and practice.* Their sympathies are atrracted wherever his are, so that while he, their Lord and Master, is on the earth, welcoming to his open arms the most despised penitent, they, in their seats of bliss, celebrate the event in notes of loudest praise.

In endeavoring to set before our minds the event of a sinner's conversion, as it would be presented to a mind in all respects superior to our own, I have no wish to make any unnatural use of the doctrines of Christianity. I wish to borrow no aid from what is uncertain or merely probable. I desire to speak soberly of what I am fully persuaded must be true.

The interest with which angels regard a sinner's repentance is, in kind, the same as the joy of all good men. But it is surer and greater, as their natures are superior to ours. I remark, then,

I. In the first place, that they rejoice in each transition from sin to holiness, as an event *which they could not have foretold.* The language of Christ seems to imply that it is the *joy of good news* which they feel. This is explained by remembering that no such pleasure as this is anywhere ascribed to *God.* Love, compassion, forgiveness, complacency, these are his; but not the joy of discovery.

> "To Thee, there's nothing old appears;
> Great God, there's nothing new."

His infinite nature embraces the future, with the present and

the past. It is not, therefore, said of *him* that *he* rejoices more over one penitent than over ninety and nine just persons. With reverence we may say that he cannot do it. Were his holiness, in which is all his delight, not infinite, could it measure and compare its delights, it would rejoice rather in the ripened character of the many, than in the birth of the new one.

But the angels are not like their Creator in this respect. Like us they measure time. They know not the future; at least, not as God does. It is expressly said that they know not when the day of judgment will be. So that when they see a child of sin turn to God, and put on the garments of righteousness, they feel, as holy men on earth would feel, more lively joy in that event than they do over many who are already righteous. It is the *event* which thrills them. The tide of joy then rises and overflows. God's nature, however, is ever full; and as it knows no abatement of his, alone, infinite bliss, so it knows no rise.

The justness of the *facts* of the Scriptures to the *nature* of the beings whom they describe, whether God, angels, or men, is admirably illustrated in this instance, and is worthy of our most serious regard. Impostors never could have risen to so high a thought. Heathen Mythology, although corrected and refined by the most exalted human genius, never represented an unimpassioned God. And this distinguished superiority we claim, not for the Christian Scriptures only, but for the entire revelation. Thus we find it recorded in the first chapters of Genesis, that when God had, by a word, made the world; when he had set the sun and the moon in the firmament, and the stars in their courses; when he had made the sea, and filled it with its inhabitants; when he had covered the earth with verdure, and had made the birds to fly in the air, and beasts and every creeping thing upon the ground; and, lastly, had made man in his own image, to have dominion over all the works of his hand, he but looked upon his marvelous creation, and simply saw that it was "good." What satisfaction is here expressed; calm only because God's nature forbids his pleasure ever to be less!

But when this same new creation burst upon the view of angels, and *they* beheld it fresh from the hands of the Creator, it was theirs to feel the full inspiration of the sight. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

So in the instance of the Scripture now before us. God's welcome to the repenting sinner is not the less because it is expressed in terms consistent with his most exalted character. His estimate of such an event we gather from what he *does;* angels', from what they *feel and say.* To them, who see the reality and nature of the change, it is an event of the highest importance. The only instances in which these superior beings

are represented as rejoicing, are at the creation of the universe, the birth of Jesus Christ, *and the conversion of a sinner.*

II. But this is not all. Great though this event be, it is not its novelty in the sinner's history, nor is it his sudden transition from darkness to light, which alone gives joy in heaven. The representations of our Saviour are inconsistent with the supposition that the event the angels celebrate is in itself trivial, much less that it is irrational and vain. I remark, then, in the second place, that they view it as a *moral* change, *in which their holy natures necessarily take delight.*

It is remarkable, that in this passage conversion is represented by that element in it which it is not possible for us to mistake, viz., *repentance.* Had Christ said that they rejoice when one *believes*, some would claim the character for themselves, because their faith is sound. Had he said, *when one is renewed*, some would have referred it to their baptism, when all their sins were washed away in the laver of regeneration. But there is no mistaking the terms he has employed: "when a sinner REPENTS." That determines his meaning. That fixes the character of the individual referred to, and the moral nature of his act. The case is that of one who, to the just view of holy angels, repents of the sins he has actually committed against his God and theirs, who sorrows for them after a godly sort, and breaks off from them with a godly hate. This is the point of immediate interest, and the one from which to view every other fact we have to present.

Were one from the ranks of those beings, who, we are told, are but a little above us, to visit our world; were he to come free from our long familiarity with the forms and fruits of sin, unprejudiced, in his estimate of human things, by habit or inclination; and could he see, not only what is said and done, but what is in the hearts of men, how certain would be his eye to fasten chiefly upon the *moral* aspect in which mankind would be presented to his view. And were he to visit the most cultivated community on earth, everywhere there would be spread before him the ruin which sin has wrought. He might see much which we call propriety and goodness; but save those few who have been "justified by the blood of the everlasting covenant," and are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," our good ones would be Hebrew sinners all, and the angel well might weep. There, in that unrenewed heart, he would see no love to God, no equal love to man; there, pride and ambition; there, lust of gold or of pleasure, or at least for independence of the Maker's will. There he would see one who dares to make light of that holiest thing there is on earth—a broken and a contrite heart. There, one who holds the truth in unrighteousness—who takes it as the Word of God, but is firmly

set never to bow his will to the Divine standard, though he die the death. Everywhere he would see those who misinterpret the oracles of God at the suggestions of their unbelieving hearts; and worse than all, men unaffected by the obedience and death of Christ, neglecting so great salvation, and resisting the Holy Ghost. More than we have imagined is doubtless true. Such visitations are made. Such sights are witnessed. Such reports are made in heaven, and perhaps are made, beloved, of you; made, it may be, in circles where the departed you once loved on earth—the mother who prayed for you, the father, the tender, sympathizing friend, the young companion who was called to heaven because too good for earth—wait to hear tidings of that repentance you promised them when they were dying, and which often you have promised to your God.

Now, I say of such a being, thus elevated and just in all his views, thus holy towards God, but swayed by sympathies, and subject to the lights and shades of feeling which belong to him as a finite soul, how keenly must he feel the folly and the sin which he beholds. How dark the picture which is everywhere open to his view. There is nothing improbable in this supposition, when we remember the language which the unerring Scriptures have employed respecting these heavenly visitors; nothing unlikely, save that which is too imperfect in our conception, and in our statement of the case.

The reverse of this, however, is the particular case given us in the text. With such a state of things open to the celestial "watchers;" with so dark a picture before them when they look upon the fairest spot—a picture which shades into the deepest darkness when they look away over the vast tracts of heathenism—how must they hail the return of *one* prodigal, and witness his penitence and prayers! No other event could equal it in importance. Nothing human could approach it in the interest of the scene. Besides, the love which one always must have for another of like tastes and dispositions, the striking contrast in which this moral event would stand with all else an angel could discover, would, and it ought, to have its effect. And it ought to instruct us, my brethren, to know that beings who are fellow-servants with our fathers the prophets, and from whom we are not necessarily cut off in sympathy, look upon this world, and look upon us in it, with far different and with more just eyes than ours. They behold the things in which men trust and glory, as well as the sinner who repents. They see the breadth, and they gauge the depth of our pride. They view the wealth at which we grasp, and the means we take to secure it. They behold the sails which whiten our seas, and the cities, and temples, and palaces we build. They observe and understand the objects of our admiration. But such things move them not.

Let us suppose a case. Again imagine such a being to be approaching some chosen spot. Let it be where science has built and enriched her temples, and where art displays her choicest productions. Besides the treasures of knowledge, imagine that there were gathered there all the choicest works of every age, in literature, in architecture, in sculpture and painting. Let everything which is sublime and beautiful in the productions of human genius be realized again, and let the city be peopled only by minds the most acute, the most sensitive, the most thoughtful and profound. Let every house be the home of the most tasteful luxuries, and of the most refined manners. And would they charm an angel's eye, and move an angel's heart? Would the lofty temple awe him, or the finished picture please him? Would eloquence rouse his passions, or would music calm them? But if, in some neglected place, one poor, it may be an ignorant and vulgar man, too dull to see the glories of art, or too indigent to possess one of its luxuries, was seen to kneel on the boards of a garret, or on the cold ground at night, to pray—that would be a sight to kindle an angel's joy. Such a broken and contrite heart would seem wiser, and holier, and fairer than all that was wise and fair in the scenes and persons around it. Such a sight would make a quick appeal to the best sympathies of a just and holy mind. One would then be seen, who has long been the slave of sin, awakening to a freedom which the worldly never know. One, who has long been ignorant of God, is coming into the possession of the divinest knowledge. He who has trembled at the thought of death, is learning how to conquer it. He who has lived only for the present and for sense, begins to live wisely for immortality. The friendless, the homeless, the forsaken of the God he had rejected, is now taken to the arms of a forgiving Father.

> "A transport glows in all he looks and speaks,
> And the first thankful tears bedew his cheeks.
> Joy, far superior joy, that much outweighs
> The comfort of a few poor added days,
> Invades, possesses, and o'erwhelms the soul
> Of him whom hope has with a touch made whole.
> 'Tis heaven, all heaven, descending on the wings
> Of the glad legions of the King of Kings.
> 'Tis more—'tis God diffused through every part;
> 'Tis God himself triumphant in his heart."

III. But it is not merely a change of character over which the angels rejoice in lively sympathy. They rejoice over the *change in the sinner's prospects for the future.*

Although they are unable to foretell future events, they must have a much better knowledge than any we possess of the connection between a life of sin and the misery to which it leads.

To them, "hell hath no covering." The more any person advances in holiness, the more clearly he discovers the necessary connection between sin and misery, and feels the justness of that Divine law which appoints it; while to those who stand much nearer to the throne than mortals may, this subject must be open with the greatest distinctness and certainty. Angels understand well the object and the terms of that probation which God has, now the second time, granted to our race; while the elevation of their moral character teaches them how much, for us, depends upon our using the boon wisely for ourselves. And when they see a sinner repent, they must have a much better appreciation than even he in his happy consciousness can possess of the punishment he has escaped, and the rewards he has won. They see him turn, not only from the fears and worst sufferings of this life, but from the bitterness of the second death. They seem him not only become a conqueror of the enemies of God and of his own soul, but enter on an endless career of knowledge, and holiness, and happiness. They best know what riches of wisdom and of love are in reserve for him, and how, these contrast with all the ever-widening woes which wait on sin.

IV. The joy of the angels springs likewise from their interest in the welfare of the kingdom of Christ, their Lord, and from their labors for its success. However imperfectly *we* see the broad distinction between the kingdoms of light and darkness, to them that distinction is plain, and is paramount to all others. However different be the degrees of piety which Christians attain in this life, however much they may differ from each other in wisdom and charity, he that is least in the kingdom of God is plainly distinguished from an enemy, whoever that enemy may be. The humblest Christian, if he be such, is reckoned among the Lord's host. The setting up of the kingdom of Christ necessarily divides the inhabitants of this world into two classes, the friends of Christ, and the children of the Wicked One. Even as Christ has said: "He that is not for us is against us." The sinner's repentance is what distinguishes the one class from the other; or rather, it is the point where Christ receives the rebel and alien, and enrolls him as a faithful soldier and servant. Angels cannot be indifferent spectators of such a scene. They, more than the holiest saints on the earth, are committed to the cause of the Redeemer, to destroy the works of the Devil, and to destroy only by winning from him the souls whom he has long enslaved. They watch the progress of that cause of holiness and of mercy which they love; to which their Lord once gave his life in the flesh, and now gives his Spirit on the earth, and his intercessions in heaven. They feel the joy of victory when his power prevails

against the deceits of Satan, and they rejoice in the honor which each conquest brings to the Saviour of sinners.

"The Son with joy looks down and sees
The purchase of his agonies;
While saints and angels join to sing
The growing empire of their King."

We must consider their regard for the government of God. To beings who reject with contempt and disdain all sensible delights as the source of pleasure, to whom the contemplation of the Divine excellence, and the obedience of the Supreme Good, is the source of an ever-increasing and ineffable delight, nothing, beyond God himself, can be the spring of so much satisfaction as the recognition and love of his authority by others. Especially must this be the case, when the vain but guilty opposition which immortal beings have shown to his law, is exchanged for a deep repentance, and He who now rules their wills by his law becomes, as he desires, the chief object of their affections.

We have thus glanced at those things which give the angels joy when a sinner repents. We need not err on this subject, although it is one which belongs, in part, to a higher order of beings. God, who is infinitely above them as well as us, has taught us far more fully respecting *His* interest in such an event. And we only need to be informed that these, his sinless ministers, are cognizant of what takes place here below, to receive all, and more than all which I have now said. The language of Christ establishes the fact, that they rejoice over one sinner who repents. Mine is only a poor attempt to represent this touching fact to your minds and my own. My object will be gained, if the fact itself has arrested and impressed you. I will add but two remarks in conclusion.

1. The first is, that the subject teaches us how much we ought to be interested in the same thing for ourselves. It is not for themselves, but for *us* that the angels rejoice. Their happiness springs from the purity and intensity of their benevolence. But if beings of such a character are so deeply interested in the subject of our repentance, how far more does it concern us. We are the ones in whose hearts and consciousness this experience must be found. In our nature there are now, either, on the one hand, all the elements of that coming misery the angels deplore, or, on the other hand, that repentance which is the precursor of the immortal happiness they now enjoy. Can *we* then be indifferent to this subject? Is it possible, even in the impenitence which some of you, I fear, have long maintained against truth and conscience, to resist the appeal of this thought?

One of the most effectual means of moral improvement is the knowledge of the light in which our conduct is regarded by persons of great wisdom and goodness, especially when they evince a deep and undeserved solicitude for our welfare. Many even teach that there is no depravity which is proof against this love; that it is the grand means of all reformation; that it is the love of superior minds which kills the angry passions; and that it is only neglect or resistance which inflames them. However this may be, all know that there is great power in such appeals, and that no one's true self-respect was ever hurt by yielding to their influence; while to reject it, is universally deemed to be the mark of stupidity, ingratitude, or confirmed depravity. So Christ teaches us that beings of rank and power, and wisdom and benevolence, to which we can lay no claim, are regarding us with the liveliest interest. Before this cloud of illustrious witnesses all the actions and characters of men are displayed. And "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation?" The depravity which can feel no shame at rejecting the gospel of repentance in so august a presence, which can bid an impudent defiance to all their holy concern, is equalled only by that which is steeled against the dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I beseech you then, beloved, by the mercies of God, and of angels too, to take up this great subject of your "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," at this point, and conscience and the gospel will reveal the whole to you. This is no fable; but it is fact. "Believest thou the Scriptures? I know that thou believest." Take then the standpoint of an angel's view, and judge yourself and your duty.

2. My second remark is, that we learn from this subject something of the value of *repentance* in the work of spiritual conversion. In the instance of the language of the text, as I said before, we cannot mistake what is meant. So that from the judgment of all those who despise repentance, as the mark of weakness or fear, we make our appeal to a higher tribunal. We take the judgment, rather of these sons of God. We hear them waking the song they sung at creation, over one whose newborn hopes provoke only the contempt or the displeasure of his earthly superiors. And we ask with Paul: "Where then is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Hence, as the only means of the greatest good, we preach to you the gospel of repentance. We know that it is the wisdom of God, and the wisdom of all holy beings. And as such we

have seen the wisdom of all classes of men own it, in the honest hour of death. Soon each of you must own it, when, perhaps, it will be too late to bring you any joy.

We have seen the sinner die, lamenting, with his last breath, his folly, and shrinking from his fate. And we have seen the Christian die already reaping, in his foretastes of heaven, the solid fruits of the repentance he, long before, had exercised. We have stood in awe, as we have seen him exalted above the wise and the great of this world, and, as it were, trampling with disdain on the unbelief which would question his faith, and on the pride which would contemn that former birth-hour of his new existence. And we come with a deeper sense of the preciousness of the gospel, to beseech you to receive it. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

A SHORT SERMON.

BY THE EDITOR.

CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY.

ACTION is one of the fundamental laws of our physical and mental being. There is an imperative and deep-seated demand for it, which cannot be disregarded without serious loss and injury. Inactivity and indolence, the failing to exercise duly our bodily members and powers, will induce weakness or disease, disarrange the system, and bring on premature old age and death. The same is true of the mind. It must be *exercised*—trained to think, reason, reflect—made to work and kept actively engaged, or its powers will never be fully developed; it will remain, at best, a weak and sickly thing. Hence, God has wisely and kindly provided for the due and healthful exercise both of the body and of the mind, and made obedience to this constitutional law of our being indispensable to success in life, and to rational happiness.

The same law holds good in *spiritual* things. The same necessity exists for activity. The demand for it is universal, and cannot be set aside. There must be ACTIVITY—the working of

the spiritual machinery of life—the exercise of the various graces of the Spirit—the doing of daily service for God—the putting forth of earnest effort in the field of self-culture and of Christian enterprise—meditation, prayer, the reading of the Word, the exercise of charity, the visiting of the sick, the poor, and the afflicted—the planning and the accomplishing of purposes for the salvation of souls, and the revival of religion, and the prosperity of the Church of God—there must be this as a daily habit of life, or there cannot be progress in the divine life, nor a healthy spiritual development, nor the enjoyment of religion. God has wisely ordered it, that if we will not work as spiritual beings, neither shall we eat; if we will not obey the laws and follow the impulses of Christian life and Christian duty, we shall have leanness of soul, and reap only sadness of spirit and disappointment of hope. And this is why so many Christians are weak in the faith; are but babes in Christ, when they ought to be strong men. They grope their way in the dark, instead of walking in the light of God's countenance; they are sad and gloomy, when they might be joyful and cheerful. They are at ease in Zion. They will not work. They do violence to the the laws of their own spiritual being, and to the laws of Christ's kingdom. They sleep when they should be awake; are inactive when a world of motives, and a world of obligations, and a world of perishing interests demand exertion—earnest, prayerful, whole-souled exertion, for the soul, for God, for mankind.

We live in a universe of wonderful activities. The Christian may sleep—may fold his arms and dream away his existence, and let his precious opportunities for self-improvement, and for doing good, which are never to return, pass away unimproved. But every thing around him rebukes such conduct and calls him to labor. The entire creation is in ceaseless motion—is ever busy; the vast systems which compose the material universe, present a scene of amazing and sublime activity; the thoughts and powers of angels, good and evil, are ever occupied; the infinite mind of God is always at work planning and executing. And the children of this world are any thing but idle; their minds and hands and resources are all worked to their utmost capacity; they drive the machinery of life with ceaseless and fearful rapidity; they run in the race for gain, for honor, for pleasure, for intellectual attainment, with all the might and energy of ambition and resolution. Intellect is taxed and tortured to bring forth new inventions; the muscular and mechanical power of the world is daily augmented, and never suffered to rest; the world is ransacked for new fields of enterprise; the face of the earth is made to put on beauty—vast wildernesses are reclaimed and put under culture. Towns and cities are made to spring up on every hand. Commerce pours its tide of activ-

ity and wealth over every sea, and along every valley. Unnumbered agencies, extending through all space, and embracing the combined energies of mankind, and laying under contribution every faculty and power of rational being, and the vast forces of nature, are enlisted and crowded to their greatest capacity, in the service of this world. We do not complain of this. It is right. It is nature acting out her instincts, and developing the mighty and irrepressible energies and resources which God has given her. But we would have the Christian learn a lesson here. Oh! how strange, how out of place, seems an ease-taking indolence in one chosen to represent God, and religion, and eternity, in the midst of such activities—one put here to have a care for the soul, to look after the interests of Christ's kingdom, to be the example of all that is pure and good and truthful, the organ of the realization of eternal realities to a world of perishing sinners! Christian reader, shall we not awake and act well our part in this scene of deathless and responsible activities? The greatness of the work to be done for God and eternity—the shortness of life—the motives of the gospel—the worth of souls—the coming realities of another world, all demand activity, and bid us put far away the love of ease and sloth, and the spirit of delay and indecision, and do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5, Vol. XXV.] MAY, 1851. [Whole No. 283.

SERMON DXLVI.

BY REV. J. FEW SMITH, PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, AUBURN, N. Y.

SYMPATHY IN THE PREACHER AS AN ELEMENT OF SUCCESS IN THE MINISTRY.

"Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity."—Heb. 5: 2.

There is an analogy, sufficiently obvious though it may be remote, between the priesthood of the Mosaic dispensation and the Christian ministry. The Christian minister does not indeed offer unto God gifts and sacrifices for sins. The Christian Church has but one Priest: the "great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," who, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God," and there "ever liveth to make intercession for them who come unto God by him." Yet, like the Jewish high priest and some of his assistants, the ministers of the gospel do bear an official relation, at the same time to God, and to the people; do conduct the public ceremonies of religion in behalf of the people, and in a certain subordinate sense are the organs of communication between God and men. The analogy is not sufficient to throw over upon the Christian ministry the peculiar sanctity and divine authority of the priesthood, by which the Jewish high priest was separated from the people, and elevated above them, and put in authority over them; but it is sufficient to justify us in finding in the requirements which God made of the priesthood, instruction as to the required character and conduct of the Christian ministry. Those requirements were of two classes: one relating to things physical, the other, to things of a moral nature. The *physical* qualifications demanded of the priesthood may perhaps all be regarded as emblematic of analogous moral qualifications which

should be found in the minister of the gospel; while the requirements pertaining to *moral* qualifications are equally applicable to both. One of these is brought to our notice in the text. It is asserted that in ordaining men to the priesthood to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin, God had in view the existence and exercise of a becoming *sympathy for the people.* He expected the high priest to have kind feelings toward the erring and guilty men for whom he was officiating, because he himself was a fallible and guilty creature. He was to "have compassion" on them—to treat them with gentleness and kindness, because of a deep sympathy with them arising from his own weakness and liability to sin. Holding to them the relation of God's representative, conveying to them God's counsels, appearing in their behalf before the Holy Presence in the sanctuary, reproving and rebuking them for sin,—he was yet to remember that he was a man—a man of like passions with themselves, "compassed also with infirmity."

And now we scarcely need the analogy which subsists between them in their official relations, to justify the application of this requirement of the Jewish high priest to the Christian minister. For if any man need to remember that he also is a *man,* compassed with infirmity, surely it is he who speaks to his dying fellow-men those momentous truths which take hold upon eternity. If any man may be expected to have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, surely it is he who has by wondrous grace been reclaimed from sin, and called to preach the way of salvation to the lost. I am justified, therefore, in using the text for the purpose of inculcating such a lesson on my brethren in the ministry and on myself. And keeping in view the great end for which God himself has instituted the ministry, and so viewing the minister as seeking most successfully to attain that end, I may go beyond the course of conduct enjoined in the expression "having compassion," which in its fulness means, *treating with moderation and kindness,* to the great *principle* involved in it, and suggested by the final clause, "for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity;" and using the word *sympathy* to cover the whole of the injunction in spirit and in practice, I announce as the subject to which I would now invite your attention,

SYMPATHY IN THE PREACHER AS AN ELEMENT OF SUCCESS IN THE MINISTRY.

1. *The preacher must enter into the feelings and circumstances of his audience in order rightly to adapt to them the truth which he preaches.* There is, indeed, a general adaptation in all truth to the conditions and wants of men. All religious truth is valuable. The main teachings of the Christian religion are always in place always appropriate, and always weighty in instruction and in-

fluence. There are prominent features of human nature common to all men. There is something in the hearts of all which is responsive to the voice of divine revelation; and he who touches before any number of men any note of the sacred harp will not fail to awaken some tone of unison in the harp of thousand strings in man. No word caught from the lips of Inspiration can be useless, or uttered in vain to any of the sons of men. It can never be amiss for the preacher to hold up before his audience the great fact which constitutes the glory and preciousness of the gospel, and, appealing powerfully to their consciences to convince them of guilt, to point them to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

But it must also be born in mind, that every truth is not equally appropriate, and equally potent for good, under all circumstances. Human nature, though the same in general, is diverse in particulars. One note of the divine harp is not adapted to all the varying shades of character in man. It is strung and tuned by the Almighty Parent so as to send forth an almost endless variety of sounds, from the gentlest, most subduing tone of love, to the deepest, loudest thunder of retributive justice; and he who harps ever on one string to man, sinful, sorrowing, tempted, triumphing, will fail to do justice to the harmony of the gospel message, and fail to do good to his fellowmen. In other words, the preacher must discriminate between the different classes of hearers, and between the different states of mind in which the hearers may be at different times, and must learn how to adapt the specific truth to the specific circumstances. He must know when to convince the judgment; when to establish his hearers in the faith; when to rebuke; when to warn; when to instruct; when to comfort; when to encourage. What the work of the ministry demands is not the mere abstract preaching of general truths; not simply the philosophy of religion. But the truths of Christianity must be set home to the hearts of men each in its proper place and time. And men are not merely to be viewed in the abstract, as sinners or as Christians, but are to be regarded in their various characters and various wants, in *classes* almost innumerable, yet having some common peculiarity of favor or of need, and *individually*, each having some special claim to regard; and the preaching must be to human nature in general, and to human nature in its classes of men, and to human nature individually. "On some the preacher is to have compassion, making a difference, and others he is to save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." To this variety of special purposes, all harmonizing in the one great purpose of securing a perfect redemption, and to this great variety in human nature, the teachings of the Bible, as already intimated, are admirably adapted; and the great truths which are to be the means for accomplishing the benevolent design of God, are presented in endless diversity of form: not abstract

and philosophic, but concrete, embodied in figure and parable and living form, so as to reach the heart, and win it to holiness. And the preacher discriminating in the manner mentioned is but imitating the divine method, and carrying out the spirit of the gospel, while he is thus "rightly dividing the word of truth," and as a faithful steward of the mysteries of God giving to every man his portion in due season.

Now, in order to secure most fully this adaptedness in preaching, something more is necessary than an acquaintance with the general features and facts of human nature. The two great comprehensive truths: man, as a fallen being, needs a Saviour; the gospel proclaims a Saviour adapted to man's need;—these must not only be regarded in this abstract manner, but they must be taken into the preacher's own heart, and thought over and felt there, and have their richness of meaning wrung out by him in his own experience, and be turned over and over by him, until he learns to be familiar with their myriad phases. He must look out upon the world, and see not only immortal beings in sin, pressing onward to the grave and the judgment; but noting well the workings of his own heart, and observing closely the conduct of his fellow-men, he must form some correct idea of the mighty struggle of the soul. He must learn where the burden presses, and bring from God's Word a power to lighten it. He must understand the strength of temptation, the bondage of sinful habit, the multiform influence of the world; and he must know how to furnish to the soul an armor by which it may ward off the darts of the adversary; must assist it in resisting temptation, in breaking the fetters of sinful habits, in disentangling itself from the meshes of sin, and the embrace of the world. He must know how to make allowance for the peculiar difficulties which beset various classes of men He must look at men and things as they are; practically, and as a man. He must feel as a man, and with all a man's feelings, and enriched by study, he must bring forward from the treasury of divine truth things for man as he is, just suited to each man's case: for the young and the old, the poor and the rich, the doubting, the feeble-minded, the ignorant, the scornful, the negligent, the careless, the awakened, the inquiring, the penitent, the meek, the humble, the sorrowful, the rejoicing. And he cannot do this unless he sympathizes with human nature; unless he enters into the feelings of his hearers. He cannot do it, if he holds himself aloof from them and above them, as a being of a different order, charged simply with messages from God to man—to man, of whom he cares to know nothing more than that he is man. Not for this purpose was man chosen to be God's ambassador to man. Not for such a purpose did the Diety become incarnate: but that man as a brother, sympathizing with a brother's condition, might address unto him the appropriate truth; that for man there might ever

be a priest, the great High Priest in heaven and his ministers on earth, "touched with the feeling of his infirmities," and so capable of speaking to his conscience and his heart. He cannot do this, if he be a mere theologian dealing in theory. He must draw largely on his own heart for knowledge. He must learn the avenues to the hearts of others. He must know how men feel, and how to appreciate their various trials, in order most successfully to adapt to them the truth. It is to be feared that there is preaching which grates upon the soul, and chills the struggling heart, because it comes to men with cold abstraction rather than appropriate truth; preaching that gives to the hungering soul a stone when it is asking for bread. There are doubts in many an inquiring mind, tending towards infidelity; there are difficulties of peculiar temperament, or peculiar business engagements, or peculiar domestic trials, which keep the soul from acknowledging Christ Jesus, and taking part with his people; and it will not do, it is often cruel, to meet these with the bare assertion, however true, that the heart is not right, that these doubts and hesitations and delays are wicked and dangerous. That is not the whole truth adapted to the case. But let the preacher with a sympathizing heart enter into these circumstances and appreciate their influence, and then with his better knowledge, and from the higher position to which the grace of God has led him, let him seek out right words to meet the exigency. Let him select divine truth adapted to the peculiar circumstances, and present this to his hearers, that he may dissipate their doubts, and help them in spite of all opposing obstacles, however peculiar and however great, to become the disciples of Christ.

2. *Such sympathy is requisite to enable the preacher to address his audience in a proper tone and spirit.* It is demanded not only that the appropriate truth be selected, but also that it be appropriately presented. The manner in which an act is done is sometimes of equal influence with the act itself. Solemn and appropriate truths may be so addressed to the hearers as to be deprived of their due effect upon them. And here I refer not so much to the *style* of the preaching, in its relation to the *intellectual* condition of the hearers, as to the *general spirit* of the discourse, and to those indescribable evidences of the speaker's feeling, which reside combined in his words, his cast of thought, his tones, his gesture.

The minister who dwells much in his contemplation on the heinousness and enormity of sin, as committed against a God of infinite holiness and benevolence, and upon the hardness of the heart, the perverseness of the will in man, is liable perhaps to assume a tone of severity and of censure in his preaching. The position which he occupies as God's ambassador bearing messages founded on immutable truth, addressing rebels, and asserting the rights of his Sovereign, and calling them to re-

pentance and submission, may give to him a tone of authority and rebuke. His own deep feeling and jealousy for God's honor may sometimes impart something of indignation to his address. But a little reflection will show that every thing like harshness, or assumed authority, or angry rebuke, is foreign to the spirit which should animate him in his ministrations. His own sense of sin, his experience of the infirmities with which he is encompassed, should teach him to speak with compassion, and a heart yearning with deep sympathy, to his fellow-man. "I also am a man," should be his feelings as he stands in God's name before them.

> "I was born of women, and drew milk
> As sweet as charity from human breasts.
> I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
> And exercise all functions of a man,
> How then should I and any man that lives
> Be strangers to each other?"

"I also am compassed with infirmity, and therefore will I be compassionate to them that are ignorant and out of the way." And deeply realizing this, he will be

> "affectionate in look,
> And tender in address, as well becomes
> A messenger of grace to guilty man."

Indeed, he who contemplates the *misery* of sin, who looks at the children of men not only as guilty, but also as wretched, must be moved with compassion for them, and have his tone softened and his manner filled with kindness. I would not be misunderstood as overlooking the great fact that man has a wicked heart, that he is a guilty rebel, that an appeal must be made to his conscience, that sometimes the wrath of the offended law must be made to roll its thunders over his soul, and the plain austere language of Divine Justice must be spoken directly to him. I should be sorry to be supposed to countenance that false philosophy, more correctly a mawkish and selfish sentimentality, which overlooks the claims of God, the demands of holiness, in sympathy for the offender. But whilst I would ever maintain the majesty of the Divine Law, and be jealous for the honor of God, I would always address man as a brother, guilty, and to be pitied because he is guilty. If I must be severe, I would never be harsh. I would ever speak the truth in love. And when I use the awful terrors of the Scripture, charge home upon him his guilt, and hold up to his view in all its deformity his heart at enmity with God, I would do it with my own heart melting into pity for his miserable state, and longing for his redemption; and in such a way as to show him that what is spoken is of God, and not of man,—is immutable truth, and conveyed to him by a brother's lips that it may affect his heart. I would let him see, and make him feel, that my

spirit is not, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou!" but "Come thou, with me, dear fellow-man, to the fountain that has cleansed my own soul." I would give him no occasion to feel that he is regarded as an outcast, lawless, and not to be loved; but would rather address him as a wanderer whom Love seeks to bring back to the paternal home. I would not let him regard me as a stranger speaking to him merely officially, or professionally, but as one who knows what is in man, who has flesh in his heart, and is of like passions with himself, and is touched by the feelings of his infirmities. I would thus regard myself as occupying, in a certain sense, the place of mediation between man and Christ; and whilst deeply feeling on the one hand my responsibility to my Lord, and anxious to maintain his honor, I would also feel deeply for my fellow-sinner. While conscious that he must be made to feel his guilt in order to secure his salvation, I would also remember that his condition is most pitiable, and seek by kindness to win him to repentance.

But the sympathy, or compassion of the preacher must not only be of this general nature: it must enter into particulars. And herein do I regard it as especially important. As already remarked, there is a great diversity in the characters and circumstances of men; and the preacher must learn to understand this diversity, to perceive the different shades of character, to appreciate the various influences which bear upon men. There may be harm done by sweeping, indiscriminate charges made against men. We must remember that we are speaking the most awful sentences that lips can utter, when we are charging upon men guilt against God, and telling them that everlasting misery is their doom. And we must remember what anguish our words may be fixing in the soul, or what scorn and hate they may be exciting, We must remember that what we say sweeps over the many hearts before us as a cheering, refreshing breeze, or as a desolating tornado, tearing and heaving the soul, or else as a cold north wind that chills and blesses not. Let me endeavor to illustrate my meaning. We sometimes hear wholesale denunciations of certain classes of men, without making any allowances for any peculiar circumstances. With some preachers it seems to be enough for every case to say, *Your heart is all wrong*; as if that alone were sufficient to make the *heart right*. With others it suffices to make the distinction between Christians and men of the world, and to look at men only in these classes, and to use the same language towards all who are not Christians. Now one who knows men, and truly sympathizes with them, will not do this. He will know that in the vast class which "the world" comprises, there are some struggling towards the light, some manfully striving against doubts and various temptations, some moral and unblamable in life, some "not far from the kingdom of heaven;" and entering into their various circumstances, he will address them with

appropriate thoughts, and appropriate tones of tenderness. All *infidels* are not to be regarded as abandoned men. That a man has *doubts* is no evidence of a hopeless depravity. And yet how little sympathy is often entertained for such men! And how are they met with charges of dishonesty, and told simply and sternly, that they have wicked hearts! And how often may their hearts be steeled in wickedness, because they find not the sympathy and aid which their souls are almost breaking to receive! Here are men engaged in business; their duties occupying them from morning till night, their minds necessarily filled with thoughts of their worldly occupations: now, shall the minister overlook their peculiar circumstances, make no allowance for their difficulties, and show no sympathy with them when urging on them their duty? Take the young; and forget the feelings of your youth, its joys and its sorrows, its temptations and its trials, when you are speaking to them; and will you do them good? Will you demand of them the heart and mind of advanced life? So there are domestic cares and trials, and the thousand little things of daily life which try the temper and test the obedience of Christians, and form the obstacles of the impenitent. All those the preacher should have in view, and his heart should go out kindly to the heart of his brother man. And so I might go on with countless illustrations to show in what direction this sympathy should be exercised. Just think of it for a moment. The merchant has his trials, and the farmer his; the clerk, the servant, the employer, the mechanic, the husband, the wife, the parent, the child, the man in authority, the man of the world, the rich man, the poor man, the scholar, the man of science, the physician, the lawyer, the church member, the amiable, the passionate, the high-tempered, the meek, the vain,—each has his peculiar difficulties. And what I mean is, that the preacher should not only have sympathy with human nature in general, but should endeavor, as far as possible, to enter into the particular circumstances of each, and treat them all with that moderation and kindness which their case demands.

Again I say, let me not be misunderstood, as regarding sin merely as a disease under which our race is suffering. I would have a preacher ever bear in mind that it is a voluntary thing, a state of heart and life for which the sinner is himself responsible, and for which he must suffer if not delivered from it; and would have him plainly and forcibly as possible set forth the depravity of the heart and the claims of the Law. But I hold that he should also have due regard to the various phases which sin, viewed as a moral disease, does assume, and administer his remedies with the kindness of a physician, who understands the sufferings of his patient, and sympathizes with him.

And this should be so, in order to secure the highest measure of success in the ministry. For as preaching which is indis-

criminate in its use of subjects, dealing simply in general truths without selecting such as are adapted to the particular case in hand,—as such preaching, wanting directness, will be comparatively ineffectual, so he who fails to show in his manner of preaching that he has a man's heart and truly sympathizes with his fellow-men, will fail to exercise over them the highest degree of influence, and to attain to the most complete success. There is power in sympathy to affect the soul. Denunciation, indiscriminate censure, sweeping charges, are repulsive to the heart, and bar it even against the truth. Sympathy wins the soul. Men listen kindly to one who speaks kindly to them; and when they see that he understands their case and feels for them, they give him their hearts. The voice of coldness, of arrogance, of haughty censoriousness, falls heavily upon them, and they will cast it back if possible; but when the tones are full-freighted with the kind affection of a sympathizing heart, they melt and subdue, and are suffered to make for themselves a way into the soul, and there to apply the needed truth. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." Let the people realize that the preacher feels for them, and seeks to meet their wants, and the sternest, most repulsive, most fearful truths of the Divine Word may fall from his lips and sink into their hearts.

3. *Sympathy contributes to that earnestness which is a prime element of Pulpit Eloquence.* Earnestness connected with valuable thought is power. It always affects the soul of the hearer. The earnest preacher, other things being equal, is the effective preacher. But no man can speak earnestly who does not feel deeply. The heart is the fountain of eloquence. He only speaks "as a dying man to dying men," who knows how to "have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Sympathy with human nature, a deep conviction of the danger and misery of mankind, an appreciation of their true condition, and a longing desire for their deliverance and salvation,—this alone, together with the right regard for God, can produce the eloquence that is worthy of the pulpit; this alone can infuse earnestness, warmth, animation, affectionate appeal, direct address, strokes powerful, unswerving, carrying truth right home to the heart, into the discourses of the preacher; this alone can enkindle on the preacher's heart that fire, and send forth from his lips those burning thoughts which enkindle a fire in the soul of the hearers. This is the true Promethean energy, which, catching the spark of celestial origin, "creates a soul beneath the ribs of death." This by itself cannot give to the preacher all the graces of oratory; but it can give that which is worth far more than those graces, and without which all mere gracefulness of style and utterance will be but as sounding brass and a tink-

ling cymbal. It can give the beauty of Love, and the grandeur of Power, in the outgushing emotion of a sympathizing heart. And therefore let the preacher who would be successful in the ministration of the pulpit cultivate such sympathy; not only having his heart beating responsive to "the great heart of humanity," but striving also to feel for the peculiar circumstances of those whom he addresses, so that each may find in him a brother.

Let me in the fourth and last place call your attention,

4. To the fact, *that such sympathy has characterized those who have been most successful in the ministry, and whom we may regard as models worthy of our imitation.* Here it will at once be admitted by those who hear me, that the ministers who have most truly felt for souls, been most anxious that men should be saved, have also been the most earnest in their preaching, and the most successful in their ministry. It is needless to cite names which will readily occur to most of my hearers. Now, their very earnestness is evidence of their deep sympathy with their fellow-men; while throughout their sermons and writings you will find expressions showing the ever-present consciousness of their being compassed with infirmity, and this causing them to have compassion on their erring and guilty fellow-men. It would be easy to quote passages from Latimer, and Howe, and Baxter, and Doddridge, and Edwards, and many others, of olden and of modern date, confirming this statement. It is true that some of them dealt largely in the thunders of the violated law. Some times they spoke like some of the ancient prophets, who, in the midst of the corruption and apostacy of Israel, were very jealous for the Lord of Hosts; and the great distinctive features of the gospel, however distasteful to man, because humbling to his pride, were ever held forth prominently by them. Still you can see the vein of sympathy running through it all, and giving it the coloring of humanity. You will find moreover the discriminating sympathy of which I have especially spoken. They sought to adapt the truth to every shade of character, and properly to consider all the circumstances of their hearers. They saw and acknowledged the difficulties which were in men's way, and then sought to help them to surmount those difficulties, and to come to Christ notwithstanding them. They never excused sin; they never confounded sin with misfortune; they never allowed their hearers to suppose that they were simply unhappy and not guilty; they never obscured the plain truths of Christianity: but still they spoke in love, and with strong crying and tears, besought men to be reconciled to God. Take, for instance, President Edwards's sermon, entitled "The Sinner in the hands of an angry God," so terrible in its subject, and productive of so great results; and you will find unmistakable evidence of a heart yearning with compassion for those sinners, and not a little of that discriminating sympathy which we are contemplat-

ing. Edwards, we know, was by no means a preacher who dealt only in the gentler features of the gospel; he never yielded any thing to the indulgence of unsanctified human affections. And yet he ever felt most deeply for sinners, and longed for their salvation, and showed sympathy with men in their several trials The pages of Baxter, who was burning with zeal to snatch sinners as brands from the burning, show how he understood the various phases of human character, how he sympathized with men, and with wonderful readiness adapted himself to the great diversity of human nature, while ever holding fast the cardinal truth of Christianity, and directing all to the promotion of God's glory. We have but to read his "Reformed Pastor," to be satisfied of this. But it will not do for me to dwell on such individual cases, lest I weary your patience. Let us go to the preachers and writers of the New Testament; and while the sympathy which I am commending is found in them all, fix your eye on its bright shining in the apostle Paul—in Paul, whose epistles contain those very things which are most severe and most offensive to unconverted men. Mark how he has a word of warning, of counsel, of encouragement, for every class of mankind; and how he never forgets throughout that he is a man; how "at Ephesus for the space of three years he ceased not to warn every one day and night with tears;" how he became all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. See how careful he always was to attribute to every man that which might be said in his favor—to admit his peculiar trial, and then to suit his address to the peculiarity of the case; how truly he was "a workman needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Paul never excused nor palliated sin. He plainly told men of their guilt, and had a stern rebuke and fearful threatening for the obstinately wicked. But no one can carefully read his Epistles, and the record of his ministry in the Book of Acts, without feeling that he had "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way, because that he also was compassed with infirmity."

But we go higher still; and taking the gospel itself as our model, how do we find it every where, along with deep abhorrence and reprehension of sin, breathing the sweetest compassion for men, and, what is more to our purpose, adapting itself with loving-kindness to all the varied wants and woes of man! How humane is its spirit! How beautiful and grand the sympathy of Divinity with humanity which it reveals!

And then, directing our attention to Him who came to preach glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, how does this sweet precious sympathy appear in all his earthly ministry; Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity; but ever did he speak sweet-voiced words to the sorrowing children of men. The proud, the hypocritical, the obstinately rebellious he did sternly rebuke; but how did he move among

the mass of men, guilty and polluted as they were, with words and tones of tenderness and kind entreaty, and a conduct that plainly told he was their friend! How with infinate variety and richness did he adapt his teachings to their condition, and thus seek to win them to himself! Nay, is not this now the precious characteristic of Jesus, that he sympathizes with us, with each of us? He was "made like unto his brethren," even us, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted," so that he can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having been "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is needless to adduce particulars to show what was the character of our Saviour's ministry. Yet if I were to select a passage which would at the same time exhibit and symbolize the spirit of kindness which characterized him, and which should be found in all his servants, I would direct your attention to the parable of the Prodigal Son. In this, while he administers a rebuke to the uncharitable and self-righteous moralist, he shows a compassion for the sinner worthy of the Divine nature. And we, my brethren, may study that parable as a lesson for us in our preaching. I would not, for the world, have in my heart the spirit of the older brother who had no feeling for the wanderer; and I pray that all my brethren in the ministry, with myself, may have mercy for the erring, tears of compassion for his guilt and danger, and tears of rejoicing when he comes a penitent to God.

I have thus very imperfectly, and yet not so briefly as I wished, set before you a subject which I cannot but regard as of vast significance, and having a vital connection with our efficiency in the ministry of the gospel. Into the *philosophy* of sympathy it has not fallen within my purpose to inquire. I have aimed to deal only with acknowledged facts and principles in their practical bearing. I have endeavoured to guard against all misapprehension, while advocating the cultivation in a high degree of such a sympathy with our fellow-men.

And now, in conclusion, let me ask your attention to some of the *reflections* which the subject awakens.

1. *It awakens admiration of God's wisdom and goodness in the establishment of the Christian Ministry.* We can see in the light of this subject that there was wisdom in the appointment of "the foolishness of preaching," as the means of saving them that believe. God knew what was in man. He knew well the avenues to the human heart. He knew all the power of sympathy; and he graciously adapted his instrumentalities to the accomplishment of his benevolent object. All through the scheme of salvation, and of God's intercourse with our fallen race, runs this principle. It is the Incarnate Word, that is to

win the soul of man and lead him back to God. It is truth going forth from a human heart through human lips, that is to be powerful unto salvation. And while this adaptedness in the Christian system to the wants of man confirms our confidence in its divine origin, it leads us to admire the wisdom and the condescending goodness of God; of God clothing the divine in the human, that he might according to the laws of humanity raise up fallen men to the divine; of God making himself Emmanuel, and in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; of God making us fellow-workers with himself in a work which angels cannot do.

2. *Our subject suggests the importance of giving as much attention as possible in our ministerial studies to the realities of practical life.* I know very well that great principles are always influential; that it is a matter of great moment to be able to rise above the tangible and contemplate the ideal; to grasp those generalizations which comprehend whole systems, a universe of thought covering all the details of truth and life. But I hold it of greater moment to be able to present those truths in such a form as to meet the actual condition of men; for one to live in this sublime atmosphere of mighty principles, and yet so to mingle with men as to infuse into them the spirit which animates him, to adapt his thoughts to their wants, and by meeting them when they can be met, to raise them up to think and feel and act aright. And this cannot be done by one who contemplates not man as he is; not simply man at large, in general, but men in all their ignorance, error, infirmity, in all their strength for evil or for good.

I know very well, also, that the careful study of the Bible, and of his own heart, will give to the minister a knowledge of human nature of inestimable importance to his ministry, even though he scarcely go beyond the limits of his study and his pulpit. I reverence the men who can and do come forth from their retirement, simple, untrained in the world's ways, and ignorant of a multitude of things familiar to their hearers, yet laden with rich truths, and uttering sentences to which every heart responds, because based on principles common to man. Such a power is great, and highly worthy of regard. Still our age and our world demand this, and also something more. This should never be sacrificed, but the other should be added to it—the knowledge of practical life, an acquaintance with men and things as they exist and move around us. The conjunction of the two is altogether possible, and forms the great man and the effective preacher.

Necessarily, in their course of preparation for the ministry, our young men are to some degree secluded from the world; necessarily, our ministers are confined for a large portion of their time to the study: yet observation teaches the importance of securing as much of such practical knowledge as possible

in legitimate ways. The opportunities afforded of spending leisure weeks or months in the active employment of some of our benevolent institutions, have proved of great benefit to many of our candidates for the ministry, by bringing them into contact with various characters, and teaching them how men, under the various circumstances of life, think and feel with reference to religion. And it may be remarked, in this connection, that the practicalness and efficiency for which the American Pulpit is distinguished, may be traced to the fact that here the minister is regarded, and regards himself so much as one of the people, not belonging to a separate class having no common sympathies with them; and also, and greatly to this kindred fact, worthy of careful notice, that so many of our ministers, instead of being simply a student race brought up amid books in cloistered halls, have been called from active operation in some other part of the field of life to the ministerial work, or through the stern imperiousness of poverty have been compelled to *work* their way to the pulpit, thus being brought by experience to the acquisition of a knowledge which no books could furnish. I repeat the thought, the minister who would be effective must remember that he is a man, and that nothing that belongs to a man is foreign to him.

3. *Our subject suggests the importance of the pastoral relation, and of the right discharge of pastoral duties.* I can do little more than barely allude to this, though perhaps the most significant suggestion of our subject. It is in the cultivation of such sympathy between the preacher and the people that the chief value of the pastoral relation is found. The faithful pastor is brought directly into contact with men of various characters, and in various circumstances. There is no such relation as that which subsists between him and his affectionate people; scarcely any so intimate and confidential. He has access to their homes and hearts; he is their friend. And if he rightly conducts himself in his appropriate sphere, he is made a partaker of their joys and their sorrows; he becomes acquainted with all their peculiar and diversified circumstances, learns where the burden presses, in what shape temptation to sin most frequently assails them, and is most likely to be successful; knows when the heart is softened, or when it is hard and stern, and possessed by angry passions. Going from house to house as a friend and a father, or as a loving brother, his heart is touched, and he may go back to his study, and come thence to the pulpit with things new and old adapted to their wants, and with a loving heart and a brother's voice he may speak to them that which will do them good. It is his privilege, as it is his duty, to lead them beside still waters, to make them lie down in green pastures, to supply them with the appropriate food and care; and to do this, he must be acquainted with their wants.

Fidelity in pastoral duty, I am well assured, in connection

with other faithfulness, will add greatly to the richness, the appropriateness, the practical value and efficiency of the pulpit discourses. And while the minister must ever regard the pulpit as "his throne," and on no account neglect preparation for it, he will be greatly aided in his performance there by proper intercourse with the people of his charge. I know the opinions of those who would be strenuous to maintain a dignified reserve on the part of the minister, who would draw broadly the distinction between the Clergy and the Laity, and assert something of peculiar sanctity and mysterious awe in the character of the minister, as giving more force to what he says; who would throw the garb of mystery around the Christian priesthood as likely to impress men: but depend upon it, it is the man who is known as the sympathizing friend, who will most truly command the hearts of those who statedly hear him. He greatly errs who neglects to cultivate, by the right discharge of pastoral duty, that acquaintance and sympathy with men, which the pastoral relation was undoubtedly designed, and is so eminently adapted to produce; while it will obviously be greatly for the advantage of every congregation to secure the services of an affectionate and faithful pastor, and by the performance of their reciprocal duties, by treating him as a brother or a father, by opening to him their hearts, unbosoming their cares, and cheering him by a participation in their joys, to keep alive his sympathy with them, and help him to be unto them an able minister of the gospel of grace.

SERMON DXLVII.

BY REV. R. E. PATTISON, PROF. IN NEWTON THEO. INSTITUTE.

THE SPIRIT RETURNING TO GOD.

"The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—Eccles. 12: 7.

In death man is the subject of a great change. It is not simply the change which these bodies experience; these frames dissolving and returning to the dust whence they were taken. Nor is it merely an exchange of worlds, the passing from one class of associates to another; to be met and to be treated on the principles which govern men in their intercourse in this life. The change effected by death is something more than a severing of those ties which bind men together in their present relations. Though through death we are to preserve our identity, and shall ever after that event be the same persons as have here lived and

acted, have enjoyed and suffered, have obeyed or sinned, the *mode* of our existence and action will unquestionably be very different. Though after the resurrection we shall have bodies, and therefore a suitable habitation, yet they will be spiritual bodies. This term may not express any specific idea as to their nature, still it does deny to our future bodies the usual properties and accidents of matter, to which they are now subject. They will be altogether unlike our present bodies as to their nature, and hence equally so in their relations to other beings.

Of nothing have we more satisfactory evidence, either from reason or from Revelation, than that both the mode of existence and the manner of action of body and soul in a future state will differ in many and important points from what they are in the present. As to the body we can form no very definite anticipations. Nor is it necessary that we should, farther than the assurance that it will be united to the spirit which it is to clothe. As to the spirit's mode of action, though ignorant of much, we are sufficiently informed to enable us to prepare for our eternal state. No reflecting mind can for a moment doubt that the soul, at death, will enter upon a wider range of knowledge and action than is opened to it in this life.

But whatever other changes we may be the subjects of at death, by none can we be affected so seriously as by the change *in the manner of knowing God.* We shall have an intimate acquaintance with God, such as we have not in this life. We shall not only have a more perfect, a more distinct and comprehensive knowledge of Jehovah, but my text intimates that the manner of knowing him will be more direct. "The spirit shall return to God who gave it." This is language adapted to our present conceptions and capacities. As if the reason why we see and feel no more the presence of the Deity is because we are removed to a distance from him; as if we were not with God, though it is "in him that we live and move and have our being." Whatever truth there is in the idea that God has a throne more central to his universe than earth; where he manifests himself more gloriously than he does here, or would do here, were we ever so holy, or were angels to make this their abode; yet most of the effect attributed to a change of place by which we are brought nearer to the Almighty is manifestly effected by a change in ourselves. We shall be able to see and know God with as much greater readiness and distinctness, compared with what we now do, as is the difference between a distant and a near view of material objects. That which in the distance is obscure becomes palpable and distinct when brought in contact with our senses. The same change, however, might be effected by an improvement in the power and perfection of our senses. Objects, the mere existence of which in the distance is now discovered with difficulty and uncertainty, would, under an increase of the power of vision, reveal to us their minutest parts, and

their most delicate texture. So when it is said "the spirit shall return to God who gave it," whatever may be its change at death as to residence or place, if spirit can be said to have either, the great change will be in its being made to open its eyes, if I may so speak, on the Divine Perfections, moral as well as natural.

The great change to be experienced then at death, is an increased vividness in our apprehension of the existence of God, accompanied necessarily with a kind of living consciousness of our personal relation to him. We find it difficult, if not impossible, to express this state of mind by a single term. We perceive what is out of, or foreign from ourselves; we are conscious of the operations and actions of our own minds; we apprehend an idea, a proposition, a principle. This last is too vague, and does not necessarily imply actual existence. Neither the first nor the second designates the complete fact. It is not merely God without us that we are to know, but ourselves in God, and God in us. Our own mental states will be an object of as distinct cognizance as the existence and attributes of God. We shall not only be conscious of our own mental exercises, but of exercises in their living connection with Him in whom we "have our being."

An abiding conviction that there is a God, is in this life, a difficult attainment. Though none but the fool can deny his existence, it is not a conviction that has prominence in our ordinary reflections. It would be a great attainment to be as conscious that there is a supreme spiritual Being, as we are sensible that there is a sun in the heavens in a cloudless day. Though many would not be more ready to surrender their belief of his existence than they would their knowledge of the existence of that luminary, still that there is a God is a conclusion arrived at in a different manner. It is the deduction of reason, enlightened by a divine Revelation. The Bible teaches us that there is a God. What we see around us of design impresses upon us the irresistible conviction that there must be a Maker. And the events daily transpiring within our limit of observation disclose to us the operations of a moral Governor. These produce conviction, when thought of and deliberately considered. But as they are the results of an intellectual process purely, they may be unnoticed or forgotten, and hence fail to exert at the time any influence upon our conduct or character. If we have rightly interpreted our text, this forgetfulness, or this want of cognizance and consciousness, will cease after death. There will probably never be a moment when we shall be unmindful of God in whom we live and move and have our being, more than we now are insensible to the warmth and light of the sun when it shines upon us in its effulgence; or, than we now are unconscious, when awake, of the ceaseless flow of thoughts and feelings which distinguish each individual from every other being in the universe. Every man has the witness within himself of his personal iden-

tity and individuality, of what is peculiar to self. He never carries within him the witness of the existence of any other being. Though the testimony borne to other beings is irresistible, it is not unceasing like that of self-existence. This distinction will probably exist in relation to finite objects in a future world. But not as to God. Him we shall know as we are known. We are now absent; we shall then be present; we shall be for ever with the Lord.

It may not be improper here to notice the fact, that he who has been renewed by divine grace does hold a more satisfactory intercourse with the Deity than we have described. There is such a fact as the fellowship of the Spirit—a sensible presence of God to the soul. This power is still faith, not vision. The believer, though filled with the Spirit, is, so long as he is at home in the body, *absent from the Lord*. It is only a foretaste, an intimation of what he is to experience in heaven. We now know in part, but then that which is in part shall be done away. We now see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. In eternity we shall perceive God, and feel the power of his presence and the divinity of his attributes and our personal relation to them, as distinctly, and perhaps more vividly than we now apprehend our own existence, or the qualities of those material objects around us which are brought in contact with our senses, which we see, and hear, and handle.

It is in this sense emphatically that the spirit may be said at death to return to God. It is to experience a change in the manner of knowing God. Imperfectly as we understand this mysterious subject, there can be no doubt that our knowledge of God will more nearly resemble intuition than in this life. Such, we believe, is the only meaning which can be given to our text. The idea is also in obvious harmony with pregnant intimations in the Word of God, if not with its explicit teaching.

That this subject may exert a practical influence, leading us to make suitable preparation for death, when our spirits shall return to God who gave them, let us consider how such a change as we have described would affect us as individuals. Were we to die soon—at any moment—would this more intimate acquaintance with God, this living, eternal *consciousness* of his presence, promote our happiness, or would it annihilate the little we have? It will produce one or the other of these effects; and as death is certain and may be sudden, we ought to consider with care and impartiality the character of our religious feelings. In this way we need not mistake. We can easily decide whether to be brought into this intimate and conscious connection with the Eternal, into the presence of God, where for no moment of our existence we can be ever unmindful of his gaze upon us, would develop that deep and holy joy which in this life the most devout feel to be pent up in the soul, struggling to break forth into an ardent flame; or whether to be

stripped of this body of sense, and to be torn from these material objects with which we are now surrounded, would be like wresting from the warrior his shield, and like sweeping away the pilgrim's "covert from the storm."

The proper question to be put, as a test, is, Do we love God?

1. It is obvious that if we love God, the more distinct are our apprehensions of his being and perfections, the greater will be our happiness, as by it an opportunity is given for the proper exercise of that affection—an affection without the exercise of which there can be no happiness. The unutterable attraction of heaven to believers is the presence of God. They love the language of the Psalmist: "In thy presence is fulness of joy." They expect to realize this; and they will realize it when the spirit that has fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ shall return to him.

The happiness of the saints in heaven will not depend simply on the fact that they are no longer to be subject to vicissitudes and disappointments—that they are to live in the world where is neither labor, nor sickness, nor death—which will make it a mansion of *rest*. It will depend chiefly on that living, holy fellowship with God, of which in this life they enjoy only a foretaste. We now hear God as he speaks to us from his throne in heaven, through his Word and his Works, and by the "still small voice" of his Spirit, speaking conviction or peace to our consciences; but then we shall see him as he is. And if we now have peace in believing; if we can say, "Whom having not seen we love; in whom, though we see him not yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," what must be the fulness and the glory of this joy when our perceptions of his holiness and love shall be those of the heavenly? What a wonderful change must the redeemed spirit experience at death! How ineffably happy, yea, glorious, must that existence be in which, let us range where we will throughout God's vast dominions, we shall be with him and shall see him as he is; shall live and act with the eyes of the understanding ever open upon the full glory of every attribute of Him whom we love with all the soul. Those who have been conscious of the love of God shed abroad in the heart in this life will not wonder at the choice of the apostle to depart and be with Christ, feeling as he did that, whilst at home in the body, he was *absent from the Lord*. Nor again at the intensity of the Psalmist's longings: "As the hart panteth for the water-brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" He that hath such religious feelings need not fear death. The change which his spirit shall experience in that event will be his gain. It will open into his soul ten thousand streams of perfect, holy pleasure, which eternity will only increase and sweeten.

2. But if it be true that the happiness of those who love God is promoted by the change effected at death, how obvious is it that a contrary effect must be produced on a mind of an opposite religious character.

It can require but a moment's reflection to perceive that he who is merely destitute of love to God could not be happy on leaving this world. Were we to overlook the native enmity of the heart to God; were it possible that a rational spirit could be neutral in his feelings towards the Most High, but destitute of love; even in that case, it is too obvious to be misunderstood, that when the spirit shall "return to God who gave it," it must be for ever void of bliss. I appeal to the reason of every unrenewed man; to you who are conscious of this want of love to God; who find no interest in religious worship, in prayer and praise, or in silent meditation on the character and goodness of your heavenly Father; whose souls are never dissolved in view of the Divine mercies; who have no peace in believing, nor fellowship of the Spirit;—I appeal to yourselves, what would be necessary to make your eternity happy? Think over in what your chief enjoyment now consists. If it be not in the service of God, is it in any thing you can carry with you into eternity? Remember, you enter that state a spirit. While the spirit shall return to God who gave it, the body shall return to the dust whence it was taken. If you do not love God, what do you love that will be associated with the spirit, the *naked* spirit,—that will soothe it, or employ its powers, or warm into life and bliss its affections? Think of your present interest in your estates, your farms, your shops, and your merchandize; it may be in your ships and your money, the provident "insurance" of the one, and the cautious "securities" in bonds and mortgages which underlie the other. You know that those sources of happiness will be cut off at death. What the moth and the rust do not corrupt, the final flames will consume. But if they were perpetuated and could accompany you into eternity, they would avail you nothing. You return to God a *spirit*, and will have no occasion for such ministers of good.

Consider, again, how far your regard for personal appearance occupies your thoughts, and makes your existence one of interest. But you know the spirit is to be separated from the body. That shall return to the dust. Reflect, also, upon the happiness now derived from your domestic relations. To say nothing of the moral character of those relations, of the ennobling enjoyment which may be innocently derived when God is honored, yet there will be no families in eternity. That is an institution adapted to our present condition, having material bodies and temporal wants. How far heaven may be sweetened or the world of woe embittered by the recollection of associations formed on earth, I cannot say; doubtless much. But we are not to have families in eternity. We are to be as the angels of God.

Think, then, I beseech you, when all these earthly sources of pleasure shall be closed; when you can no longer be happy in the acquisition of property, in the support and mutual affection of your friends, or in devotion to your persons; when the pleasures of appetite and taste are no longer to be realized, what remains? You open your eyes upward, and there is poured upon you the full blaze of the Divine glory. You cast your eager glance around on either side, and God is there, for he is every where. He fills all in all. And by his thus presenting himself to you, he says virtually, and so you understand him to say: Be ye happy in me! But to the beauties of his character, to the attractions of his perfections, the soul is dead. There is nothing in him that you should desire him. Can you be happy? Will not the soul be empty? Would not the abodes even of the righteous be to you as cheerless as the solitude of the prisoner's cell? Say, friend, conscious as you are of being in your unrenewed state destitute of love to God, could you be happy in eternity if you could hold only a neutral relation to him? You can be happy now, because there are objects around you which you do love. You are happy in created objects. But can you think of any thing in eternity that will supply their place, if you cannot enjoy God, and such of his creatures as are in the image of God? Does the Bible speak of any thing? Does reason suggest any? Come, let us reason together. Settle this question now, I beseech you,—whether you can be happy in eternity with your present feelings unless you can carry with you what you know to be impossible? On this ground, then, alone, you cannot but perceive the necessity of a new heart and a new spirit.

But this is but a partial view of the subject. It is more serious than this. It is not sufficient to say that the sinner will find nothing in eternity to interest him; and hence the mind will be left vacant, a mere blank. This is of too negative a character. Every thing about man as an active being, who has a soul bound to its Creator by relations of inconceivable solemnity, is positive, actual. The feelings must be elicited. Man will love or hate. Men often have feelings here which are drowned amid the confusion of this life, so that even the enemies of God are not conscious of any such state of heart. But the moment the spirit shall return to God, or, in other words, the moment it shall enter on an existence where it cannot exclude the consciousness that it is surrounded by God, that every act and thought and affection has direct and inevitable reference to him; then will be developed what had before been unobserved, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

The more fully to illustrate this truth, let us direct our attention to two particular relations which we hold to this Omnipresent Spirit; and which in eternity will be more appreciated than they now are.

1. There will be a lively and abiding feeling of dependence on God. In this life we often trust to our own strength, or recognize in the laws of nature certain means of support and protection, so that we may, and many do, live much of the time without any suitable feeling of dependence on the Almighty. To have this feeling of dependence every instant, to have it, too, very vivid, as we must have when the spirit shall return to God, will be a great change. Let such, therefore, as are sensible of their unreconciliation to God, consider how it will affect their happiness. You are to have a lively apprehension of an entire dependence, at every moment, for ever, on one whom you do not love; yea, more, with whose moral attributes you have no fellowship; to whom and to whose moral government you feel a fixed and inherent opposition; and who, you are sensible at this very moment of your dependence on Him, is treating you as a rebel against his government and as a dispiser of his mercy. Could you, friend, be happy in a state of dependence on a fellow-being, between whom and yourself there exist such feelings of estrangement? Fancy yourself the dependent inmate of one towards whom you have feelings of uncontrollable aversion, and who, you know, has feelings of just resentment at the wrongs you have committed against him and his household; conceive yourself, for the limited space of fifty or even twenty years, sheltered and clothed by him, sitting daily at his table, under the silent rebuke of his eye, in every glance of which you cannot but read his just estimate of your baseness and guilt. Could you endure this? Would not darkness and oblivion be a boon? Would you not prefer death? But your relation to God, in the world of spirits, must be inconceivably more intimate. Wherever you move, every act, and every exercise of each faculty will only remind you of Him who keeps you in being. You will feel your very existence to be drawn out every moment from Him in whom is life, but to whom you are unreconciled. Can you be happy?

2. Besides this feeling of dependence, we shall also have an acute sense in eternity of the claims of the Divine law upon us as we do not in this life. God says, Be ye holy, for I am holy. We now know this to be his requirement, but we do not appreciate it; and we do not feel the force of the law resting on the conscience. The chief reason is, we have not an abiding sense of God's presence, accompanied with a clear view of his perfections. In eternity, the apprehension of the claims of the law of God will be precisely those of our perception of his existence and attributes, since his law is a transcript of his moral character. Here we can sin; and because God keeps silence, we feel no restraint upon us. There is little or no compunction of conscience; so indistinct often is the impression on the mind that there is a God, at least that he is a holy God. But it will not be so in eternity, Every thought and volition will be seen to have in it

moral character; and the mind will instinctively refer its actions to the moral standard. If what we have said before be in substance true, the perfections of Jehovah will so blaze out upon the intelligent powers of the soul, that not to make this comparison will be impossible. Were a voice from heaven repeating, in the solemn accents of Divinity, the commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, it would not in all probability produce an impression so deep or so vivid as will be experienced in eternity by the secret living consciousness of the soul that "the law is spiritual." Could you be happy on earth with this claim, thus forcibly addressed to you? Is not the quiet of conscience now experienced, much of it at least, the result of forgetfulness—because you do not consider? Have you never experienced any uneasiness as you have felt this requirement urged upon you? Have you not felt it to be a demand which you had no heart to answer? Though sensible that it is right that you should be required to love God, and to love him supremely; still, have you never been sensible at the same time that it was painful to acknowledge the claim? Has it not been the conviction of the understanding and conscience triumphing for the moment over a reluctant heart? But can you enter eternity, where this claim will never be forgotten, nor its justice doubted, but from the living remembrance of which and the acknowledged justice of it the heart revolts? Where you shall feel the claim of God upon your affections, and yet not an emotion of love be awakened, but the opposite? It shall only call into livelier action the secret hostility of the heart to such a being as God is, and to such a government as his. Can you, can any person, endure an endless existence like this? Are you aware that such must be your condition, if you die unreconciled to God? To say nothing of that punishment which God may inflict on you directly as the desert of your sins—or of the remorse which you must inevitably experience at the recollection of past offences, as it shall be suggested to the conscience of the different periods onwards in eternity: Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime wast guilty of this or that transgression, didst omit this or the other duty, or didst, on occasions which can never be forgotten, treat lightly the Divine mercies—to say nothing of your now, by a life of impiety, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; can you as you are, unreconciled to God, venture into his holy presence? You are now conscious of shrinking even from the *remote* intercourse which the worship of him on earth requires; can you endure to be for ever *with* him?

Under these views death is a solemn event. It fixes character. He that is holy will be holy still. He that is unholy will be unholy still. He that is holy will love God, for he is holy. And the more intimate the intercourse, the more fully will this affection be developed. The more God is seen and known,

and his goodness enjoyed, the deeper will be the well of love opened in the soul. And this will constitute an essential part of the Christian's heaven. But let it never be forgotten, that opposite emotions must be excited in the mind of one who does not love God. If the heart be alienated from him, the more God is known, the stronger will this alienation become. This must lay the foundation of the sinner's future suffering, and constitute no unimportant part of it. It is impossible, where a spirit of blasphemy has not already taken possession of the heart, properly to estimate such a condition.

The inference that, to be happy in the presence of God, *the heart must be changed*, is so obvious, that further confirmation is unnecessary. How important that a fountain of holy love be opened in the soul before death; as that fixes character. After death comes the judgment. As the tree falls, so it lies. Ye must be born again. Nothing will avail but a "new creature." And all this must be experienced before death. And as death is often sudden and unexpected, why delay? why not seek a new heart now? why not this instant offer the prayer, "create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me?"

O inquiring friend, what rich grace is seen in the *way of life!* You perceive your need of an essential change in your feelings towards God. You are doubtless convinced that nothing can effect this but the energy of the Divine Spirit, renewing and sanctifying the heart. But do you duly consider that God cannot, consistently with his character and the justice of his government, enter, by his Holy Spirit, your estranged and defiled heart, except through the mediation of Jesus Christ? If we who were enemies are reconciled to God, it is by the death of his Son. Not only, therefore, ought we to lift up adoring hearts to our heavenly Father for his unspeakable gift, but to seek in prayer and by faith in Christ the aid of the Spirit. This is the richest fruit of his death. You can hardly be so ignorant of the nature of sin as to view yourself entitled to this spiritual aid. You are more liable to deem your wretched condition a plea,—a reason for its bestowment. It was the reason why the Son of God died. But had our peril and wretchedness been a ground for sending the Spirit, the sacrifice of God's only-begotton Son would have been spared. Sensible therefore alike of your guilt and your helplessness, come as near to God as you now can by faith—come by the new and living way, which is ever open—come by the blood of Christ. Be assured of his willingness to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. But be also assured that he will grant this mercy only for Christ's sake. Then with his redeemed ones you shall in this life joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement; and when your spirits shall return to God, living in the likeness of God, your joy shall be full.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 6. Vol. XXV. JUNE, 1851. Whole No. 294.

SERMON DXLVIII.

BY REV. THEODORE D. WOOLSEY, D.D.,

PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

RELIGION OF THE HEART AND OF THE LIFE.

"I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end."—PSALM 119: 112.

It is impossible to compress a truth with all its qualifications and explanations into one short sentence. The Psalmist here speaks of what *he* had done in order to secure his own obedience to God, and leaves out of sight for the time what *God* had done. He thinks of his state of mind, and of his own agency in its existence, without thinking of the agency of God which went before and enabled him to act. He might have said with equal truth, "*Thou* hast inclined my heart," and "*I* have inclined my heart;" for the one prepared the way for the other.

There was a time, however, in the life of the godly man when he could not have used this language, "I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes." He felt the binding force of the spiritual law, but he found himself to be carnal, sold under sin. And this bondage was a bondage of his will; such a bondage that the occasional longings which he felt to escape from it were powerless, and his struggles to do right were without fruit. From these efforts of his unassisted nature to turn the current of his own will he discovers his weakness, as well as the misery of being in thraldom to sin. And when he finds that this bondage of his will to sin has been removed, experience has taught him that he did not make himself willing, that a mightier than he broke the chain of his captivity. He now cries out to God, "Thou hast inclined my heart to perform thy statutes; thou hast worked in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure."

Thus the original inclination of his heart to obedience comes from God, as he feels and owns with gratitude. He has therefore become possessed of a new moving power; and just as a lame man when cured by a physician may say, "I walk," or "I run," so may he say, when he contemplates his efforts to be obedient after his conversion, "I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes." Nor can he ever lose sight of the cause which has rectified his will and has imparted to him this new power, any more than the lame man can attribute to himself the recovery from his infirmity. But there is this difference between the lame man and him. The former can go about without the physician, and perhaps will never need to call for his aid again during life. It is a *past* fact, and it may be an *isolated* fact in his history that a strength beyond his own gave him the use of a lost power. But it is not true that the godly man can incline his heart to perform the statutes without the aid of God. And whether this continual aid of God is necessary to sustain his new nature because of its *weakness* in the state of trial on earth, or whether—what is more probable—no finite being, man or angel, *can go alone* upon a path of virtue, but the security of all must consist in their taking hold of God's arm—whencesoever this necessity arises, it is *real*, and found to be real in his constant experience. If he thinks to say, "I can incline my heart to perform thy statutes," because at one time in my history thou madest me inclined by thy power, such a feeling, which cuts the cord binding him to a *present God*, is the prelude to a fall. When therefore he uses language like that in the text respecting what he has done or can do, it is always used with the tacit understanding that a supply of power for such exertions of his own comes from the Omnipotent fountain. He is now like a man who has no money of his own, but is allowed to use the name of a rich friend to an unlimited extent. He can say, without the least shadow of boasting or self-confidence, "I will engage in such and such a transaction involving very large liabilities;" he shrinks from no outlay because it is vast, and calls the operation his own; knowing all the while that he is nothing but a poor man sustained by the unfailing capital of another. And the good man is often found to have such a confidence in the strength of an ever-present God, that he is not afraid to calculate upon the future, and to affirm what his conduct will be in certain contingencies where he may be exposed to trial. He says, "I can do all things," but he always adds, if not in word at least in thought, "through Christ Jesus which strengtheneth me."

Thus the power of the Christian to sway his own will always implies a co-operation of the Divine Spirit and himself. What he does, as his part of the labor, consists not in simple desiring or longing, however intense. There is no inclining his heart by the

simple will to incline it. That is not consistent with the nature of a rational being, and lies beyond the reach of finite power. In order to do what the Psalmist speaks of in the text, hard work upon himself must have gone before. He must have brought the truth of God before his reason, his conscience, and his feelings; he must have roused his sluggish soul, as he would rouse a sleeper amid the flames; he must have meditated long enough upon the Divine Word to have it exclude other thoughts, and occupy his soul. When after such efforts he finds his heart roused into an inclination or tendency towards obedience, he can very truly say, "I have inclined my heart," because his actings were the cause without which the inclination would not have taken place. But he knows full well that these labors would not be crowned with success without the presence of a higher cause in its fulness of power.

From these first reflections suggested by the text we pass on to the remark that it is his *heart* which the Christian inclines or bends to the performance of duty. Not merely his choice, taking all things into view, moves in that direction; not merely his conscience; but his heart, as including all the free and glad movements of his nature. *This* indeed is admitted in all our systems of theology, and in all our treatises upon religious experience, that a religion without affections is worth nothing; but after all we need to feel how important the affections are for the elevation of Christian character as well as for its enjoyment. Although Christianity at the root is alike in all, there may be said to be two sorts of Christians: one class to a great degree contemplate the life of the soul as a series of duties, and are controlled by the feeling of obligation; the other class regard the essence of religion as lying in feeling towards God, which they seek to arouse by acts of meditation and worship. It is obvious that the habits of thinking of both classes are attended with peculiar dangers. The one class is liable to slide down to a dead routine of duties, and their religious life scarcely rises higher, as it sometimes appears, than that of the moralist who frets and chafes at the restraints of obligation. The other class is peculiarly prone to self-deception, and when sincere, is apt to be satisfied with the deliciousness of religious emotion without going farther. But still, supposing the men of both these types to be real followers of Christ, I have no hesitation in saying that the man *with a heart* has risen to a higher level than the man *with a conscience*. For it is quite possible that the *conscience* shall recognize a moral law without taking into full view the living, personal Law-giver. We are in great danger, when we act from a sense of duty, of living amid abstractions; of separating in thought the part we have to act in the world from the great Author of the natural and moral system. It seems as if there

would be duties and rights, were there no moral Governor of the universe. *Thus* such a principle of action *does not bind us to the throne of God*, but rather, taking a lower aim, attaches us to the rules and laws which he upholds. The affections, on the contrary, bring us into direct communion with God himself, and lend the aid derived from love of the Law-giver to the satisfaction which our moral nature takes in the law, which emanates from his character. If there could be two persons, one of whom had love without the sense of duty, and the other the sense of duty without a capacity for love, the latter could be only a laborious moralist, while the former, even without the feeling of right, could do what is right out of regard to the God whom he loves. This latter supposition indeed can never be true in matter of fact. There never was a being made without a sense of right and without conscience. Much more then, when this property is present in the soul, will the man who loves act so as to please God.

There is a lamentable defect in such Christianity as is without emotion. After allowing for differences of temperament, we cannot but feel that the little of heart manifest in religion, compared with the amount of moral feeling, argues a low state of the religious principle in the soul. We are too far off from a personal God and a personal Saviour, and therefore life circulates feebly through us, as through the extremities of the body. We bend our purposes to do right; we run into a thousand schemes having the benefit of man in view, but the heart scarcely beats. Our religion rather enables us to do good in this world than prepares us for the employments of the celestial home where God is the centre of all affections.

And this fact, that we do not enough *incline our hearts*, renders our characters also unattractive. That man, certainly, who acts from impulse and uncalculating generosity, is not much to be commended; and yet all men love to look upon such exhibitions of character. This common suffrage is testimony in favor of the emotions and of their occupying a prominent place in the character. They are more strictly personal than any thing else which belongs to man. They reach forth towards persons, and they arrest the regards of persons. If then our Christian life is to be love, it must have a large measure of heart in it. We must love God and man to such a degree that the province of duty may be to restrain us from pouring ourselves out, so to speak, upon other beings — from overlooking our own valuable interests in our zeal for what is foreign to ourselves. The heart must not only be a moving force, but a very strong moving force, the wind which fills the sails; while reason and conscience ought to be like the man at the bowsprit and the man at the helm of the vessel.

The Psalmist proceeds to inform us of the point towards which he bends his affections. "I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes." His affections do not find their gratification simply in meditating on God or on his word; but they pass beyond the regions of contemplation into those of practice. The philosopher, who vainly aims to purify himself by lofty thought and by intimacy with elevating objects, may stop short of this; he may incline his reason or discursive faculty to reject the gross materials of thinking on which the mass of minds feed; but the result of all this is nothing more than that the habit of meditation becomes stronger the longer it lasts. His soul is not purified from selfish affections, nor drawn to God—the centre of obedience, and the source of activity to virtuous minds. He is rather rendered more selfish by his habits of philosophical meditation; for he finds them so much pleasanter and easier than the hard work of active self-sacrifice, that it is next to impossible to arouse him from his sluggish inactivity. Thus there is no performance, *no action* in his system, which begins and ends with speculation.

Nor again does the godly man stop at inclining his heart to *desire* to perform the statutes of God. This is the limit which many reach; and this the highest attainment of their lives, *to long* to be good, to wish that they were obedient without being so. There is so much intrinsic beauty in such a character, and there is of necessity so much dissatisfaction with a life of sin, that the heart while yet unrenewed, without turning from sin, turns in eager longings towards a holier and better life. But still the man stays long, perhaps for ever, in his state of sin, drawing encouragement, it may be, from these very longings, that it is not with him as with other men, yet never ripening them into the fruits of effectual resolve. He is like a man lost in thick darkness amid the wilds, and seeing a light afar: inclined to go in that direction; and yet never performing the journey lest there should be swamps or pitfalls between him and the light.

Actual obedience is the proof to which we must come at last, in our own case, as well as in that of others, of the sincerity of our religion. There is no real inclination of heart towards God which fails of securing the performance of his statutes. The evidence of true piety is a life of holiness and usefulness, springing forth from a heart where God is enthroned. And, without this evidence, we must decide that the law of Christ, as a system of practice, is rejected by the soul.

That which the godly man's heart is inclined to perform is denoted by the term, *thy statutes*. On these words we remark, in the first place, that the Psalmist does not describe his state

of mind as an inclination *to do right* simply; he does not say that, smitten with a love and admiration of virtue, he resolves on a life conformable to her dictates. No! his soul is not dried up by contemplating abstract law, or an ideal standard of character. A present personal God is the source from which he draws the motives and the rules of his obedience. The soul that is saved has returned in reconciliation and love to the God of the Bible, not to abstract rectitude, to Stoical or Platonic perfection. It is a higher reason, with such a soul, for performing the statutes, *that they are God's*, than *that they are right*. And the statutes are right, in its estimation, not chiefly because they commend themselves to the reason, but because they emanate from a God whom it trusts.

We remark, *once more*, on these words, *thy statutes*, that the will of God presents itself to the mind under the form of fixed, unchangeable morality; for *statutes* are something not arbitrary or varying with caprice, but settled law, built on a lasting foundation. If, indeed, God's will, without giving forth a general law, whispered to the soul, in each particular case, what to do and what to shun, the spirit of a child would rejoice in such communion with its all-wise Father. But, since this is not the kind of intercourse kept up between God and the soul, since general rules are given to it, to try its fidelity in special applications of them, and to suit its freedom and powers of thought, it rejoices that the nature of God has stamped his immutability upon his law. These statutes change not, like human ones, through experience of their defects, or because a new law-giver has come into power; but, drawing their nature from God, who alters not, and from the permanent nature of man, they continue as the days of heaven. And as their substance is, so also is their form, as it appeared in the written Word, which is the fixed code for man and for earth. Opinion varies; practices condemned in one age are praised in the next; the standard of character, even in the Christian Church, is for ever shifting. If God's will was to be derived from the marks of it which he has impressed upon our minds and natures, how should we grope after duty, and waver when we seemed to have reached it: but the written Word is a fixed light; it is a law not *ambiguous*, not *temporary*, not *obscure*, not *hard* to be applied, not *difficult* of access. Its essence is as immortal as the existence of God and his creatures.

And this performance of God's statutes, towards which the godly man inclines his heart, is to be *perpetual*. The word *always* in the text points to a contrast between a life of steady piety and a temporary as well as a fitful or periodical religion.

In the first place, the word implies something which is not a temporary religion. I am aware that the text does not declare the heart to be *always inclined to obedience*, but only affirms that, at the time when the Psalmist expressed his feelings, he was *inclined to be always obedient*. At another time, therefore, it might be said, he could, notwithstanding the feelings now expressed, be inclined in the opposite direction, and these changes might be passed through several successive times. There is indeed no impossibility, either in such veering and shifting of the affections, or in the final extinction of pious feeling, followed by a state of hopeless spiritual death. But still the tendency of the renewed nature is to be uniform and unwavering, like the truth on which it feeds and the Spirit which gives it life. The bent of the affections, too, is the immediate cause, in the hand of the Spirit, of obedience; and obedience reacts to add vigor to the affections. Perpetuity, then, is the law of Christian life; and that state of the affections at any one time, which secures the performance of the statutes, is the evidence that such a law is reigning in the soul. The apostle recognizes this law when he says, "if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."

A temporary religion, then, is a religion without a root, which derives no nourishment from the Divine Word through the heart, but is sustained, while it continues, by something which is consistent with the reigning power of sin. It may be built upon hopes, and may have the form of a conversion for the groundwork of those hopes; and may look to God with joy and thankfulness as the author of the pleasant feelings which it entertains; and may cherish some kind of sympathy towards the people of God; and besides influencing the feelings, may exert some slight power over the temper and moral character. But in a little time, when the fire has gone out which made such a blaze, and the life has left the tree which seemed so fair, the worthless nature of such religion is manifest to all men; for all men of a sound mind estimate the value of religious character by the faithful performance of the statutes; and argue, from the short-lived existence of such religion, that it was not of the true kind.

The characteristic of piety contained in the text is equally opposed to *periodical religion*. And here we do not mean to condemn that kind of godly life, which at intervals takes a start and shows a new power of growth; which, having moved along for some time nearly on a level, ascends at once to a higher level, and afterwards to still a higher. It may be that *this* is the law of Christian improvement; that the religious life is to be compared, not so much to a uniform ascent, as to a series of advances; that the Spirit, present in greater power at one time

than another with the individual as with the Church, accomplishes his work by a succession of impulses, which constitute epochs long to be remembered. But this is far from what we intended by periodical religion; this is *so far* from implying suspension of religious life or retrogradation, that every change is for the better, and steady, perpetual vigor is insured and not obstructed. What we intend is the opposite of all this: it is a kind of life which, for the greater part of the year, or for a longer period, exhibits little difference between the professor of religion and the mere man of the world in regard to the principles on which daily business is conducted, or in regard to the interest felt for the truths and duties of religion. During this long winter of deadness, you would not know him to have any vitality; and instead of inclining his heart to perform the statutes always, he has no appearance of having a heart at all. By-and-by, however, the community where he lives is powerfully affected by convictions of the reality of Divine Truth; the true followers of Christ seize the occasion to rise to a higher standard of feeling and of duty; and he, like dead timber on the water, is borne along with the current, or like a body brought within the galvanic circuit, moves and acts as if some real vital power had been infused into him. His actings, however, are the copy and the effect of what he sees around him. But this galvanized life, having no higher source than sympathy and alarm, has no independence, and must cease as soon as circumstances change. Whenever the life of the true Christians around him is a little more hidden in its manifestations, influencing the whole sum of the actions more and the feelings less, it ceases to arouse any sympathetic feeling in him. He dies down again; he goes back to the same point of worldliness as before. Perhaps the process is repeated several times over, so that the amount of his religion consists in brief periods of pretended life, in which he reflects and apes the feelings of Christians, followed by a death, frozen and insensible as a Greenland winter. It is needless to say, that such a man is very far from the character described in the text of him who inclines his heart to perform the statutes always.

We are now arrived at the last words of this verse, in which the Psalmist declares, that his resolution to perform the statutes of God reaches *to the end.* It is impossible that a sincerely religious man should prescribe any limit to himself beyond which his obedience should cease. The inclination of the heart towards God, which is true, is essentially general and absolute, and must therefore resolve upon universal and never ending obedience. I say this is involved in *its very nature*, for it is dictated by a perception of the rights of God, which are as last-

ing as his existence; by a perception of the beauty of holiness, which is unchangeable; and by a perception of the nature of happiness, which associates it forever with the service of God. There is no reason for obedience which will not be conclusive for entire obedience throughout eternity. Thus the least control of religious affections in the heart excludes all limit of time. And when the soul has tasted the sweetness of a life of piety, its own highest happiness now is a new motive in favor of pursuing such a life unto the end. What can prevent it from being thus inclined, when its highest joy and highest duty coincide; when the course which it chose, under less pressure of motives, is found to be more inviting, and no circumstances can exist to make it otherwise?

Thus we see that sincere purposes of obedience are as far as possible from being temporary expedients, or mere experiments after happiness. They have something eternal about them. Although, when first aroused by Divine grace in the mind, they have the nature of winged thoughts, yet there is an alliance between the soul which conceives them and the everlasting God. They aim at nothing less than a permanent union with God, the source of good; they soar above all condition, above all time. There shall come an end to all else that is earthly, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

And not only does the godly man incline his heart to obedience which is without end, but such obedience is secured, under grace, by such resolutions. In themselves they have a tendency towards permanence; and they grow in strength, becoming habits of the religious life. Nor is it to be doubted that the Divine Spirit works through them to secure the endless growth of the seed which he planted in the soul.

And this inclination of heart, of which the Psalmist speaks, is not to find its termination at the end of this earthly existence. The closing words of the text, "*even unto the end*," only serve to strengthen the word translated *always*, yet they might suggest, to an English reader, that the end of life was thought of as the limit of time when the performance of the statutes would necessarily cease. And indeed, at that limit, many of the duties of life, arising out of our bodily constitution and social relations, must cease; and a revolution of being will be ushered in, of which we know thus much, that the service of God will not be suspended. But, as the Christian looks forward to this change, his heart's inclination to obedience finds here no end; but whatever else he shall leave behind him when he shall lay aside the body, this inclination of heart to the statutes of God is felt by him to be inseparable from himself. Whatever the flood of death, as it rises over his soul, shall sweep away—supposing,

even, that an utter forgetfulness of earthly scenes shall ensue, so that he shall awake again as a new-born infant in the heavenly state—yet *this* shall not be swept away—this undecaying principle of allegiance to his God, which is now a part of his immortal nature. He knows not what new sphere he shall move in, what new obligations shall be put upon him, what new statutes of the celestial polity shall supersede those of the earthly, which are to vanish away; yet he has confidence enough in God to know that the great Law-giver will command nothing which is not wise and right, or which is not conducive to his subjects' blessedness; and therefore, he is prepared with a free inclination of heart to welcome the constitution of God's kingdom of eternity, whatever it shall be. Here, then, we approach the full meaning of the words, "*always, even unto the end.*" And here we see the nobleness of the principle of true godliness, which, after a willing performance of God's statutes on earth, begins with new energy its career of obedience in eternity, compared with that other principle, which even for a little time on earth showed no really good effect on the life, but, in the hour when obedience was tested, gave up the soul to the power of sin.

I cannot forbear calling the attention of my hearers, as I close my discourse, to the great wisdom of the representations, which are made in the text and elsewhere in the Scriptures, of the religious character. I refer to the union in one definition of religious feeling and religious obedience—of the love of God and the actual observance of his statutes. There have been many attempts made in this world to unite the soul to God merely by religious contemplation, or religious emotion. The soul of many a mystic has been filled with lofty thoughts of God; and as he grew familiar with the beauty of the Divine countenance, and excluded the images of grosser things from within him, he became satisfied with himself, and felt a kind of superiority to those men of baser mould, involved in the works of life, whose souls had not been raised to the height of such contemplations. And yet multitudes of these men of work would do more for their friends, more for their country, more for mankind than he; his end is reached if he can enjoy elevating contemplation, but he derives from it no motive to quicken him to duty. To him God is only as a painting, or an image exquisitely wrought. He gazes and admires, but no obedience follows. His definition of religion includes only the beauty of the Divine perfections, as held before the mind.

And so the religious sentimentalist, whose taste is gratified as he beholds God's skill in nature, and whose love is awakened, as he reflects upon his goodness and mercy, who thinks that *he*

certainly cannot be counted among the irreligious—he too fails, most grievously, in not linking together these pleasing views of God with actual obedience. The two are divorced from one another in his soul, so that many a poor ignorant Christian, without refinement or native sensibility, will stand up at the judgment day, and shame him by works of love and of mercy for which he felt no promptings.

On the other hand, the formalist occupies exclusively the practical department of religion. He has no belief that unsubstantial sentiment or meditations on Divine beauty can procure heaven. Something must be done to obtain the Divine favor. He must deny himself, must mortify himself, must surpass others in doing works of beneficence, in punctuality of devotion—in the drill of religion. As for inclination of heart, and a glad consent of his inner man to the service of God, alas! he knows nothing of it. There must be some feeling of the burdensomeness of obedience in order to suggest to him that it is meritorious.

How partial and one-sided do these false kinds of *religiousness* appear when placed by the side of the comprehensive, soul and life-embracing religion of Christ. Let that be but once implanted within the man, and now there is no longer a want of concord between his emotions and his actions; but his whole life in the feelings and the deeds plays a harmonious tune, the strain of which ends in God. And the reason of this is, that while the mystic thinks perfection attainable by contemplation; and the sentimental religionist, by warming natural reverence and admiration of God into love; and the formalist thinks, either that the external action is the all-important part, or else that it will awaken and improve the somewhat imperfect inward principle; the truly godly man begins his religious life with acknowledging the corruption of his heart, and bewailing his past alienation, and returning to allegiance in the way prescribed by the gospel. Then, when an inclination of heart is actually commenced, it is as natural to perform the statutes as it is to live. But the prescriptions of natural religion and of unhumbled human nature for curing the disease of the soul, are made on the principle that a slight change is necessary, that it is a thing not needing an inward cure to be right in the sight of God. The Scriptures, by uniting in one definition the religion of the heart with that of the life, not only make each a test of the genuineness of the other, and show that true religion controls the whole nature; but also, by representing it to be a deep and governing principle, lead to the conviction that only a renewed nature can possess it, that it must be produced and maintained by a life-giving Spirit.

SERMON DXLIX.

BY REV. ENOCH POND, D.D.,

PROF. IN BANGOR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THE LITTLE LEAVEN.

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."—GALATIANS 2: 9.

THIS seems to have been one of Paul's common sayings, or proverbs; as we find him using it on different occasions, in the same words. The word *leaven* is used by the apostle in every instance, I think, in a *bad sense;* or it is used figuratively to denote a *bad thing.* In the text it has reference to a particular error in point of *doctrine.* In other cases it denotes errors in *practice.* Thus the apostle speaks, in one place, of "the leaven of malice and wickedness."

It is proposed to consider the maxim under consideration in both these points of view. I shall endeavor to show, in respect both to *doctrine* and *practice*, that apparently slight deviations are eminently hazardous; that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

First, let us consider the truth of this maxim in respect to *doctrine.* The particular case which the apostle had in view, when he penned the declaration in the text, is highly instructive. It was that of the Judaizing teachers. Their error consisted not so much in practising circumcision and the Jewish law, as in *insisting* upon these things as essential to salvation. "Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, or ye *cannot be saved.*" This was substituting circumcision and the Jewish law, in place of the blood of Christ, as the foundation of the sinner's hope, and the ground of his justification. This, therefore, was an *error;* but it was a single error, and in the estimation of many at that day, a trivial one, if one at all. But Paul thought differently. He saw clearly the nature of the error in question, and to what it must lead. He predicted that the little leaven, if suffered to remain, would leaven the entire lump; and so it proved. In their zeal for circumcision and the Jewish law, these Judaizers set aside at once the atonement of Christ, and the kindred doctrine of justification by faith. They were led also to deny the divinity of Christ, and held him to be no greater than Moses. And because Paul opposed them in their

errors, they proceeded to deny the apostleship of Paul, and to reject his Epistles, as constituting any part of the sacred Word. In short, they went on, from one thing to another, till in the course of a few years they were separated from the Church, and fell into a state of irretrievable apostasy.

Another case, going to illustrate the same principle, occurred almost in the apostolic age. It was that of the *Gnostic teachers*. The prime error of the Gnostics was a philosophical one. It grew out of their too eager inquiries respecting the origin of evil. Knowing no other cause of evil, they were led to ascribe it to the influence of *matter*. Matter, they said, is the source and the centre of all evil and of all vice. Now, admitting this philosophical speculation to be an error, most people, perhaps, would say, there can be no harm in it. What danger in believing matter to be essentially evil and corrupting, and in tracing our moral corruptions to such a source? But listen for a moment to some of the inferences which these ancient Gnostics drew from this fundamental maxim of their philosophy. If matter is essentially evil and corrupting, then God can have had no hand in creating this material world. Such a supposition would be infinitely degrading to him. This world must have been the work of some inferior and malignant demon. Again, as matter is the source of all evil, God cannot be the author of our material bodies. The body is the cruel prison and corrupter of the soul, with which some hateful spirit has invested it, and from which it becomes us to rid our souls as far and as fast as possible. Hence that "neglecting of the body," of which Paul speaks, and those dreadful austerities which many in ancient times were led to practise, for the subduing of the flesh. Again, the Gnostics said, if matter is evil, and the source of all evil, then, when Christians and other devout men have once laid aside their material bodies, they will never have them more. There will be no resurrection of the body. There will be no other than a moral, spiritual resurrection, and with good men that is past already. Those who denied the resurrection in the days of Paul, and against whom he argued in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, (chap 15,) were undoubtedly of the Gnostic class.

But the Gnostics, or a portion of them, pursued their reasonings still farther. If matter is so essentially evil and corrupting, then our blessed Saviour cannot have had a material body. He *seemed* to have one. He *appeared* to eat and drink, and walk about here on the earth, and suffer and die like other men; but it was all an illusion. He was a mere spectre—an apparition—a spirit, but not a body. It was the inculcation of this error which led the apostle John to insist that he had not only seen but "*handled* the Word of Life;" that Jesus Christ had come *in the flesh;* and that those were very Antichrist who denied it. (1 John 4: 2, 3.)

I have noticed but a few of the perverse inferences which the early Gnostics—and more especially those who had some respect for Christianity—were accustomed to draw from their prime error as to the evil and corrupting nature and tendencies of matter. Enough has been said, however, to show how this one error worked in their minds, and led them along to a perversion and corruption of the entire Gospel. It proved with them, as with the Judaizers, that a little leaven leavened the whole lump.

Instances illustrative of the same point are constantly occurring in our own times. Take the case of an individual who is first led to doubt, and then to deny, the proper divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He may think this, at the time, a small departure from the common faith, and one attended with little or no danger. "Of what importance is it," he says, "so long as I hold to the divine mission of Christ, and receive his instructions, whether I believe or not in the proper divinity of his person?" But the results of a few years almost invariably show that the question *is* one of very great importance. For, having rejected the divinity of Christ, the individual supposed will, if consistent, reject the atonement; since none but a divine person can have made an atonement sufficient for a guilty world. And having discarded the idea of a divine Saviour, and of atonement by his death, our inquirer will proceed on to a denial of the connected doctrines of depravity, of regeneration, of justification by faith, and of all that is essential in evangelical religion.

The late Dr. Priestley was a student in theology under good Dr. Doddridge, and commenced his ministry as he tells us, a moderate Calvinist. He entered upon his downward career, by denying the proper divinity of Christ. He was first an Arian, then a Socinian, and then a Materialist and Universalist. He then denied the inspiration of the Scriptures, and closed his life in a state of almost infidelity.

Nor is his a peculiar case. Hundreds and thousands have passed through substantially the same experience. Nor would the case be different, supposing a person to commence his wanderings from some other point besides that of the divinity of Christ. Suppose him to commence, if you will, with a rejection of the doctrine of the entire sinfulness of the natural, unrenewed man. The race, he thinks, is not fallen so low. We should not take such humbling, degrading views of human nature.

Starting from this point, our inquirer is next led to doubt, perhaps, respecting the character and work of the Saviour, and the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. "I do not feel that I am fallen low enough to need an almighty Saviour, and an almighty Sanctifier, and I cannot believe that any such provision has ever been made for me."

Having rejected the doctrine of depravity, the individual supposed denies, of course, the kindred doctrine of *regeneration*. The most that men need is *reformation*, not regeneration; to have their characters improved and amended, but not to be born again. And without the doctrines of depravity and regeneration, he cannot hold to any radical distinction between the righteous and the wicked in the present life. "There are differences, indeed, in the characters of men; some are much better than others. But all have some good in them, and there is no radical difference or distinction between the righteous and the wicked." And if there are no radical distinctions among men in this life, the next inference is, that there will be none hereafter. "All may not be equally happy in the future life, but certainly none will be for ever miserable. The eternal burnings of which we hear are a mere bugbear."

Having descended to this point, the individual supposed has but another step to take, and if he is a consistent man, he will certainly take it. He will reject the divine authority of the Scriptures, and settle down in cold and cheerless infidelity. For when he looks into his Bible, he finds all those doctrines which one after another he has discarded, clearly there. They are *in* the Bible, and by no dint of honest interpretation can they be got out of it. And it only remains to reject the whole together, to put out the light of revealed truth, and commence sailing across the troubled sea of life, and the dark waters of death, and into the dread ocean of the future, with naught to direct him but the glimmering rays of misguided and perverted reason.

Instances like those here supposed might be multiplied to any extent, and these taken, not from fancy, but from real life. The history of the Church, from the beginning downwards, is filled up with such cases; strewed all the way with the wrecks of individuals who having wandered from the path of truth, have found afterwards no resting-place. They have continued to wander more and more, till the whole mind has become corrupted, and the little leaven has leavened the whole lump.

And it is easy to account for these disastrous results, from the natural workings of error, and from the principles and operations of the human mind. Let a person get away from the Bible, and fall into error on almost any point of religious doctrine, and (if he has an active, inquisitive mind) the imbibed error *will diffuse itself*. It will not lie in the mind alone. It is inconsistent with whatever of truth there is in that mind, and to make room for it, this truth will gradually displaced. The one error will ere long become two, and the two three, and the three four, and so on till the whole mind is disordered, and faith and a good conscience are shipwrecked together.

I have thus far illustrated the apostle's maxim in the text, in its

relation to Christian *doctrine*. We are to consider it, secondly, with regard to *practice;* or (which is the same) in regard to defects in moral and Christian *character*. It may be shown that in respect to character, as well as doctrine, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

It is so with strictly *religious* character. Fatal declensions in religion are not ordinarily accomplished at once. The fearful descent is not passed over at a bound. The first step in the declension is probably slight—scarcely perceptible. The next is greater, and the next greater, till Christian character is at length forfeited, and hope is gone. A young Christian—a recent convert—a recent professor of religion—with high hopes and animating prospects, begins, it may be, to neglect partially his secret devotions. His closet duties are from time to time omitted. Next, he is found to neglect the stated meetings of the church. Next, the company and conversation of Christians are shunned, and the company of the ungodly is frequented. Next, you hear of him as mingling in some scene of sinful pleasure and amusement; and it is not long, ordinarily, before this man can swear with the profane, and drink with the drunken, and laugh at the censures of the church, and set his brethren at defiance.* How often has all this been acted over in the evangelical churches of our own country! How often, alas! have my own eyes seen it, and wept over it in secret places!

And the same course of things is commonly observed, in respect to mere *moral* character. No one commences life with habits of confirmed vice. This is not possible. Nor are such habits fastened upon a person by a single act. The progress of degradation and ruin is gradual. It is at first a little leaven; but if suffered to remain and operate, it leaveneth the whole lump.

Here is a young man, we will suppose, who is vain of his person, and naturally fond of dress and show. This is his ruling passion, his easily besetting sin. As he has not the honest means of gratifying his unholy desire, he resorts to such as are disreputable—dishonest. He descends to deceit and fraud, and it may be to secret and petty larceny; and when his crime is suspected, he lies to conceal it; and if one lie will not answer his purpose, he lies again. By this time, his conscience has lost its power over him; his moral principle is well nigh gone; and he is prepared for any thing. He stops at nothing for which he has a strong temptation.

We may suppose the case of an older man—one who has entered on the active business of life. *His* passion is for wealth. He

* The apostle John has reference to cases such as this, when he says: "They went out from us, because they were not of us," &c. 1 John 19.

has an unconquerable desire to be rich. He sets out with the intention to be honest and honorable in all his dealings, but *he will be rich*, and so—trusting to his good fortune, and hoping for a favorable issue—he branches out into business beyond his means. His error, at the first, is simply one of imprudence, perhaps, but it soon runs him into grosser sins. To accomplish his plans, he has occasion for more money than he can get honestly, and what shall he do? Shall he suffer defeat? Shall he incur a failure? Or shall he descend to dishonesty and wickedness? Shall he put another man's name to a little piece of paper; or cheat an honest, unsuspecting creditor; or obtain goods on false pretenses? The temptation is too strong for him, and he yields to it; and from the moment of his yielding, he enters on a downward path, from which there is no return. He flounders on; he plunges along from bad to worse, till at length property, character, comfort, and perhaps life, are all sacrificed together. He learns, in his own terrible experience, the truth of one of Paul's assertions: "They that *will* be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." He learns the truth of another of Paul's maxims: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Less than a hundred years ago, there lived in England a clergyman of the Established Church, whose name was William Dodd. He was a popular writer and preacher, was settled in London, became one of the King's chaplains, and obtained other valuable preferments. But he was vain and extravagant, fond of show and popularity, and though his income (for a clergyman) was great, his expenses were greater. He became embarrassed, and to relieve himself from difficulty forged a draught on his friend and former pupil, the Earl of Chesterfield. He was soon detected and convicted; and as forgery was then a capital crime in England, he was publicly executed, in the year 1777. We have here a terrible example, in high life, of the truth I am endeavoring to impress upon you. You here see how sins not regarded as disreputable at first, and thought perhaps to be trivial, lead their unhappy victim along, till he perpetrates an act for which there is no reprieve; till he (in the full sense of the apostle) drowns himself in destruction and perdition.

The Scriptures abound with like examples, all going to show the downward tendency of sin, and the certainty of its issues in ruin and in death. Take the case of the first murderer, Cain. He began with envying his brother; then he quarrelled with him; then he slew him. David's fall commenced in the indulgence of lascivious desires. These led him into adultery; and in the hope of concealing his sin and shame, he plotted and perpetrated murder. Solomon — in accordance with oriental custom, but in dis-

obedience to the express command of God—surrounded himself with outlandish women. He thought there was little harm or danger in what he was doing, but the event (as might have been expected) was most disastrous. To show his liberality, and at the same time to gratify his heathen wives, he must set up heathen temples in Jerusalem. "He built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab; and for Moloch, the abomination of the children of Ammon; and likewise did he for all his strange wives, who sacrificed and burned incense to their gods." And what was the consequence? The Lord, we are told, "was *angry with Solomon*, because his heart was turned away from the God of Israel;" and from this period we trace all the subsequent afflictions of his house.

The selling of his Master for thirty pieces of silver was not the first sin of Judas Iscariot. He could not have committed such a crime, without much previous training and preparation. Judas seems to have been an ardent lover of money, and to have had some skill and tact in the use of it. It was on this account, perhaps, that he became a sort of treasurer or commissary for the apostles, carrying the bag, and receiving whatsoever was put therein; and it came out afterwards that he was in the constant habit of purloining from that bag. He took, as he had occasion, the property of the company, and used it for his own private purposes. By the continual indulgence of his thievish propensities, the heart of Judas became dreadfully hardened, his avarice and covetousness were confirmed, and he was prepared at length to perpetrate a deed unparalleled in the annals of human wickedness; a deed which will not only blacken his name, but consume and damn his soul for ever. "Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

In all these instances, we see illustrated the one great principle of the text, viz.: *progress in wickedness*. Little sins prepare the way for those which are greater, and these for others which are greater still, till a depth of iniquity is reached from which there is no return; till the character and the soul are entirely ruined. It is commonly said, that one lie draws ten more after it. With about an equal propriety, the same may be said of all other sins. Every act of wickedness may be expected to draw ten more after it; and each of these ten may be expected to draw ten more; and thus the transgressor goes on (unless Divine grace interpose to arrest him) multiplying and accumulating his transgressions, until iniquity proves his ruin.

We do not commonly see any great, enormous sin standing out upon the character of a man alone. Perhaps we never do. Others of a less flagrant character go before it, and prepare the way for it. Sins grow upon the characters of men, not alone,

ers, or rather they follow each other in continuous
eginnings of which are comparatively slight, but the
h, in every case, (unless averted by sovereign grace,)
n and perdition. "The little leaven leaveneth the
."

ect suggests some important counsels, with which I
, 1. Let us all beware of seemingly slight aberrations,
th of the gospel. No one can doubt that the Bible in-
stem of religious truth, and no one of *us* ought to
what this system of truth may be. It was clearly
ie apostles and their immediate successors. It was as
ht by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, and is
i their published confessions of faith. It is held now
e, and in much the same sense, by pious evangelical
all over the world. We have the means, then, of
iat the faith of the gospel is; and let all who hear me
eemingly slight aberrations from it. We are not in
eparting at once, and *entirely*, from the faith of the
becoming downright heretics and infidels at a bound.
in danger of relinquishing something of "the form of
s;" of substituting some error in the place of some
God has revealed; and of feeling that so slight a de-
i the established faith cannot be a matter of much im-
But be it remembered, that great and destructive here-
ways begun with apparently slight deviations from the
faith. And be it further remembered, that the worst
e commonly pretended, at the first, that their devia-
ut slight—too slight to demand either notice or cen-
was with the Gnostics in the second and third cen-
it was with the Arians in the fourth century. So it
e Pelasgians in the fifth century. So it was with the
in the seventeenth century; and so it has been with the
of modern times. When Unitarianism first showed
country, the constant pretense was, that it was a very
ation—too small to be made the subject of controversy,
on any division or separation among Christians. And
has it grown! And to what, unless renounced, is it
grow, but to an entire subversion of the gospel?
is, as I have before said, that a little error, once ad-
the mind, will not lie alone there. It will work and
for itself; and not for itself only, but for other con-
s; and these will come in and make room for others;
work of depravation will go on, till the whole mind
rrupted, and the faith of the gospel is entirely dis-
i little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."
ware then, I repeat, of the little leaven. Let us be-

ware of seemingly slight aberrations from the truth. Let us "hold fast the form of sound words which we have received." Let us understand "the faith once delivered to the saints," and contend earnestly for it, and let no part of it be flattered or wrested from us; knowing that the beginnings of error, like the beginnings of strife, are as when one letteth out water; first a rill, then a river, then a roaring and resistless torrent.

2. Let us beware of seemingly slight departures from the ways of holiness and virtue. Great and fatal declensions commence, as we have seen, in the indulgence of little sins. This is true of *spiritual* declensions, and it is equally true of *moral* declensions. No one ever ruined himself, spiritually or morally, by one single, outrageous act of wickedness. No one ever commits such an act, till he has been through a process of preparation for it. Those who now hear me are not in great danger, I trust, of becoming thieves and murderers and adulterers at once; but we are all in danger of sliding into courses of sinful indulgence, which shall lead us insensibly along to the perpetration of the most outrageous wickedness — any thing, to which we may have a strong temptation.

I repeat then, let us beware of seemingly slight departures from the ways of holiness and virtue. Let us beware of the sinful thought and the sinful desire, which, if indulged, will soon ripen into the sinful purpose. Let us beware of what are sometimes (though improperly) called little sins. It is these little foxes that spoil the vines. It is these little sins, as they are called, to which we shall be most strongly tempted. It is these into which we shall be the most likely to fall. These are the snares which the great adversary of the soul has most cunningly laid for us. If we escape these, we shall probably escape the rest. If, by Divine grace, we resist and overcome these, we may hope to go on, in a straight and sure path, to the end of our pilgrimage, and the consummation of our hopes.

Finally, it becomes those who are already entangled in the meshes of sin, to make their escape without delay; and this is, more or less, the case with us all. It is especially the case with the impenitent, unconverted part of this assembly. Such are not to regard themselves as already pure—having nothing to do but to preserve themselves in a state of moral purity. But you are already *sinners*—entangled in the fatal net; and the question of greatest interest to you is, *How shall we get out of it?* And on this point, as you know, the gospel authorizes but a single answer: "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die." Go on as you are, my impenitent hearers, and your ruin is certain. Parley, and delay, and daub with untempered mortar, and satisfy yourselves with

slight and insufficient remedies, and your ruin is certain. Your only safety is to turn right about, forsake the destructive paths of sin, enter the strait gate, and keep the narrow way of life; and though it may lead you over hills of difficulty, and amid scenes of trial, and through the dark valley of the shadow of death, it will surely bring you to a glorious end. It will lead you up to those heavenly hills, where Jesus has gone, and is waiting for you. Having finally overcome, you shall be permitted to sit with him on his throne, as he has overcome, and is seated on his Father's throne.

A CHRISTIAN.

A CHRISTIAN is born of God, engrafted into Christ, and a habitation for the Holy Spirit. His nature is renewed, his mind illuminated, his spirit changed. He is not what he was, for grace hath made a difference; he is not what he desires to be, for grace is not yet perfected; he is not what he shall be, for grace shall be consummated in glory. The knowledge of Christ is his treasury; the mind of Christ his evidence; the love of Christ his song; conformity to Christ his life; to be with Christ his pre-eminent desire. By faith he rests on Christ, receives Christ, and looks to Christ. He hears Christ's words, treads in Christ's steps, and seeks Christ's approbation. He speaks the language of Christ's kingdom, reveres Christ's laws, obeys his ordinances, wears his costume, and lives to his glory. The life of Christ within him is the principle of his being; and because Christ lives, he shall live also. In the Christian, Christ lives and speaks and acts. He is Christ's representative on earth, his witness before men, and his follower before God. The Christian hearkens to Christ's teachings, rests on Christ's sacrifice, avails himself of Christ's mediation, and cheerfully obeys Christ's laws. He inquires, What would Christ have me know, what do, and what enjoy? To know Christ, is Christianity intellectual; to obey Christ, Christianity practical; to enjoy Christ, Christianity experimental; and to be like Christ, Christianity perfected. As bread to the hungry, as water to the thirsty, as the rock in the sultry day, is Christ to the Christian.

The Christian is in the world, but not of it; among the world, but yet separate from it; passing through the world, without attachment to it. The idolater boasts in his idols, the Mahometan in his false prophet, and the Romanist in the Virgin Mary; but the Christian glories only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian is a man, and may err; an imperfect man, and may sin; but a renewed man, and shall have his fruit unto life eternal. The Christian is a warrior, and must fight; but he is a conqueror, and must prevail. The Christian sojourns on earth, but dwells in heaven; he is a pilgrim in the desert, but an enrolled denizen of the skies. The Christian is the impress of Christ, the reflection of the Father, and the temple of the Holy Ghost. Contrast him with the infidel in his faith; with the profligate in his life; with the merely moral man in his heart, and with the Pharisee in his spirit. His pedigree is from Jehovah, his nature from heaven, and his name from Antioch. O Christian! great is thy dignity, refulgent is thy glory, interminable thy blessed hope. All things are thine; thou are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

If so, you are clothed with humility; you have a deep and habitual sense of your sinfulness; you abhor yourself for your forgetfulness of God, ingratitude, pride of heart, unworthy indulgences of appetite and passion, and a thousand failures in duty, known only to God and yourself: "Behold, I am vile!" is the frequent language of your lips, and the pervading sentiment of your heart; though you dwell little on the infirmities and sins of which you are conscious, in conversation with others, they are constantly before your eyes, and constrain you to lie low, infinitely low before God, and heartily to acknowledge your desert of all the wrath denounced against the sinner, and that "on grace alone your hope relies."

If so, you forget the things that are behind; such as the convictions of sin, righteousness, and judgment you once felt; the apparent change of moral feeling to which you attained; and the obedience you thought to render to the Divine command; and you look to the things that are *before*, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God: not that you never recall the day of your hopeful espousals, nor remember the loving-kindness of the Lord in the hours of darkness, nor speak of what he hath done for your soul, in praise of his mercy; for to all this you are invited and bound; but your oft-violated vows will rise before you, your daily repentings and sinnings, your strong resolutions and inexcusable failures, will upbraid you, and mock your aspirings for assured hope, unless they drive you to renewed actings of faith, and the fresh dedication of your all to God, in

sole dependence on that grace which saveth to the uttermost. Past experience will comfort you no further than it is sustained by present devotedness and earnest effort for perfect conformity to God.

If so, you are actively employed for Christ; you love his service; it is your meat and drink to do his will; to glorify and enjoy God is the highest end of your being; you have your own salvation in view, and work it out with fear and trembling; you have your eye open on the salvation of your family and your neighbors; you defend the truth of God when it is assailed, and vindicate his honor from the aspersions of his enemies; to do all this, you search the Scriptures, commune with God in your closet, exemplify religion in your daily conversation, attend diligently on the means of grace, and persuade others neither to neglect the Bible, nor contemn the ordinances of God, nor walk in the way of the ungodly, nor sit in the seat of the scornful; you neglect none of the ordinary duties of life, but provide conscientiously for your family, and promptly meet the claims of society, and in all things aim to keep a conscience void of offense.

If so, you love the prosperity of Zion and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Christ's errand into the world was to save it; if you are Christ's you have the same mind that was in him, and not only rejoice in all the triumphs of the cross, but labor to multiply and extend them. Millions are in the way to perdition; they are still within the reach of prayer, and the arm that is mighty to save. God has commissioned you to be laborers together with him in saving them; and, if faithful in executing the commission, his grace will be found sufficient for you in life, in death, in eternity. If these things be so, the question is settled; you are a Christian.—*Congregationalist.*

THE GOSPEL INVITATION.

"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."—JOHN 6 : 37.

IN no wise! How broad is the door of welcome! "God," says a holy writer, "is like one on his knees, with tears in his eyes and extreme fervor in his soul, beseeching the sinner to be saved." He met the prodigal son half way. Ere the ungrateful wanderer could stammer forth, through penitential tears, the confession of his sins, the arms of mercy were around him. The prodigal thought of no more than the menial's place; the father had in

readiness the best robe and the fatted calf. "There is no such argument," says Bishop Reynolds, "for our turning to God, as his turning to us." He has the first word in the overtures of mercy. He refuses none, he welcomes all; the poor, the wretched, the blind, the naked, the burdened, the heavy-laden; the hardened sinner, the aged sinner, the daring sinner, the dying sinner—all are invited to the conference: "Come now, and let us reason together." The most parched tongue, that laps the streams from the smitten rock, has everlasting life. "When we forgive, it costs us an effort; when God forgives, it is his delight." From the battlements of heaven he is calling after us: "Turn ye! turn ye! Why will ye die?" He seems to wonder if sinners have pleasure in their own death. He declares, "I have none."

My soul, hast thou yet closed with the gospel's free invitations? Have you gone, just as you are, with all the raggedness of nature's garments, standing in your own nothingness, feeling that you are insolvent, that you have "nothing to pay," already a bankrupt, and the debt always increasing? Have you taken hold of that blessed assurance, "He is able to save unto the uttermost?" Are you resting your eternal all on him who has done all and suffered all for you; leaving you, "without money and without price," a free, full, unconditional offer of a great salvation? Say not your sins are too many, the crimson dye too deep. It is because you are a great sinner, and have great sins, that you need a great Saviour. "Of whom I am chief," is a golden postscript to the "faithful saying."

Do not dishonor God by casting doubts on his ability or willingness. If your sins are heinous, you will be all the greater monument of grace. You may be the weakest and unworthiest of vessels; but remember there was a niche in the temple for great and for small, for "vessels of cups" as well as for "vessels of flagons." Ay, and the smallest vessel glorifies Christ.

Arise, then, and call upon thy God! We cannot say with the king of Nineveh, "Who can tell if God will turn?" He is "turning" now; importunately pleading, and averring, on his own immutable word, that he "will in no wise cast out." "Though ye have lain among the pots, ye shall be as doves, whose wings are covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold." Close without delay with these precious invitations, that so, looking up to a reconciled God and Father in heaven, you may even this night say, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 7. Vol. XXV.] JULY, 1851. [Whole No. 295.

SERMON DL.

By. Rev. WM. T. HAMILTON, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE GOVERNMENT STREET CHURCH, MOBILE, ALA.

RETRIBUTION PROVIDED FOR IN THE LAWS OF NATURE.

"There is nothing hid that shall not be manifested."—Mark 4 : 22. Compare with this, Luke 12 : 8. "Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light."

As might be expected in a revelation from God, the Bible contains matters that are striking; some that are obscure and mysterious, and some that are strange, startling, and at the first glance seemingly incredible. While yet reflection, patient examination, and sometimes the lapse of time itself, may serve to dissipate that obscurity, and to render plain and intelligible what once appeared incomprehensible. Many prophetic passages, once dark and unfathomable, have been thus elucidated. Other passages also, such as the text, "There is nothing hid that shall not be manifested;" and again, "Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light;" and again, such as this, "For every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof,"—mere hyperbole though we might perhaps, on a first hearing, deem them, may yet, on a little patient examination, be found to be *literally, strictly, and severely true.* Such patient examination I invite you with me to give to the subject of *retribution;* to the position warranted by my text, that, *In all we do, we are responsible; and the consequences of our doings, without one exception, we must meet!*

That man is thus responsible, as a moral agent, a great many plain and weighty considerations combine to show; as, e. g,:

1st. *His structure implies it.* Man, like all other created beings, is dependent for continued existence, and for the supply of his ever-recurring wants, on the God that made him. But there is a wide, a marked distinction between man and all other of earth's living occupants. Like the beasts that roam around him, man has sprung from the ground he treads on, and he is nourished on the supplies yielded by earth in her increase. Like them, too, man is subject to infirmity, disease, suffering, and

death. But, unlike the other denizens of the earth, man has a spiritual as well as a mere animal nature; he has an intelligent mind, no less than a material body. An immaterial spirit forms the essence of the living man; exhibiting powers, capacities, and susceptibilities, which appear to be entirely wanting in the brute creation. Now, it is a universally admitted axiom among thinking men, that God has made nothing in vain; and that all the several parts of things, the various objects in nature, are adapted the one to the other, and to the whole. *E. g.:* The root, the trunk, the branch, the sap-vessels, and the leaves in plants; the gills, the fins, and the air-bladder in fishes; the structure and position of the eye, the ear, the stomach, &c., and the form and structure of the teeth in land animals, and of the wings and feathers in birds,—each and all show clearly the ends they were designed to serve, and the element or medium in which they were intended to be used. So invariable are the rules applicable in such cases, that from the skeleton, ay, from the mere fragment of a bone, scientific skill will determine with precision the position, the size, the power, and the use of the muscles, that bone was designed to sustain in the living animal,—the food on which that animal was nourished, the instincts by which it was moved, the element in which it lived, and the habits of its daily life.

Nor are the laws established and operating in the world of intellect and emotion, the world of spiritual life, less definite or less stable than are those stamped on physical nature.

There is, in every human breast, inherent and deep-seated, a feeling that a right and a wrong there is. To distinguish between right and wrong, in most instances, there is the capacity; and invariably there is a feeling of obligation to adhere to the right and to shun the wrong. When this inward monitor urging adherence to the right is disregarded, and inclination to the wrong is yielded to in defiance of conviction, there speedily follows a feeling of uneasiness, a self-condemnation, and in many instances a dread of coming evil, consequent on that wrong doing. Now, this capacity to judge of the right, this conviction of obligation to adhere to the right, this self-condemnation, and this uneasy, though indefinite apprehension, the result of disregarding conscience when wrong is done, are all peculiar to man; we see no indication of anything like them in the brute creation. They distinguish man above all other tennants of our globe; they prove him a moral agent,—so made, as that he acts ever under the weight of responsibility for his doings; and they do therefore furnish a strong probability that, *evidently capable* of responsibility, responsible he is for his doings, and that he will be held and treated as such by his Maker. Otherwise, all these large capacities and distinctive susceptibilities have been given to him in

vain. The very conformation of man, his moral structure and capacities, bespeak him responsible at all times. But further:

2d. *The Divine perfections confirm this view.* That there is a distinction between right and wrong is undeniable, and that adherence to right is conducive to the peace of society, and to the personal happiness of each individual, is certain. Nearly all the pains we feel and the unhappiness we experience are the result of wrong doing somewhere, either in ourselves or in others. To repress evil is to contribute to human happiness, and to do so much toward the banishment of unhappiness. To repress evil and to promote the right, therefore, benevolence itself would prompt. Now, inasmuch as justice is nothing other than an enlarged benevolence,—in other words, justice is benevolence guided by wisdom,—justice must demand that evil be repressed and the right fostered. If, then, the punishment of evil doers, and that in exact proportion to the malignancy of the evil and the guilt of the evil doer, be the best, or if it be even an appropriate means of repressing evil, then justice and benevolence both demand that man be held strictly responsible for his doings, and punished according to his demerit. But God, our Maker, is a being of absolute perfection, wise, benevolent, and just. In making man such as he is—capable of discerning between good and evil, instinctively impelled to do what seems to him right, and to avoid the contrary, and certain also to find his happiness and his entire well-being affected by his own conduct directly, and by the conduct of others almost as directly—God has, by the very perfections of his own nature, guaranteed the responsibility of man, and the punishment, in strictest justice, of all ill doing.

In this world such award is not always made. Sometimes it is, and strikingly so; as, e. g., "when *evil hunts the violent man to overthrow him.*" But very often such award is not here rendered; for the wicked do, not seldom, live through a long and prosperous career, and die surrounded with honors. But the immortality of man assures us that hereafter there may be ample opportunities to clear up all difficulties, and vindicate the justice of a righteous God!

For, 3d. *The Bible emphatically asserts this doctrine*, telling us of retribution awaiting all!

"God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every man may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done whether it be goodor whether it be evil." Again, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Again, "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment!" and

the text, "There is nothing hid that shall not be manifested." From these and sundry other passages of Scripture, it is plain that, if words can convey the idea, then the Bible does teach that retribution actually awaits every man, and that, for ALL his doings, he shall be called to a strict account. "The secrets of all hearts shall be made plain."

Further, 4th. *There is and there always has been, an instinctive expectation of such retribution awaiting him, universally felt by man everywhere.*

Of all this, the pangs of a guilty conscience, which no prosperity can quell, no honors can dissipate, no earthly distinctions can thoroughly allay, furnish clear indication. Agitated by remorse for his misdeeds, even when no apprehension of punishment from the hand of man could be felt, the guilty perpetrator of evil, high though he might be in command among his fellow-men, has found his prosperity unavailing, his joys embittered, and his very life a burden! Conscious guilt has driven men to voluntary confession of their crimes, and has impelled them to solicit punishment at the hand of human justice, as though with the hope of propitiating offended Heaven, and making some expiation, by present suffering, and so averting, or at least mitigating the Divine vengeance. Moreover,

The religious system of every nation under heaven recognizes, in some shape, the doctrine of human responsibility and a future judgment. You see it in the ancient tenets of China; in the Budhist doctrines of Hindostan; in the classical myths of Pluto and his infernal domains, of Charon the ferryman of the Styx, of Minos, the inflexible judge of the dead, with the fabled joys of the shadowy Elysium, and the varied horrors of Tartarus. You see it in the trial of the dead among the ancient Egyptians, in their doctrine of the judgment of souls before the god Osiris, with the scribe of judgment, the god Thoth, and the forty-two judges in the region of Amenti.* It is stamped upon every line of their long ritual of the dead, in every pictured chamber of their countless tombs, and on every sarcophagus, on every mummy, and on every papyrus roll drawn from their innumerable cemeteries. Similar tenets have been found prevalent among the aboriginal hordes of this western continent, north and south; yea, even among the barbarous tribes roaming in the heart of Africa, recognizing a future life, a judgment after death, and punishments varied and appropriate to the delinquencies that had marked the life on earth of those arraigned in judgment; all, all evincing the presence in man's breast, find him when and where you may, of a deep-seated belief, that each act of man's life will, sooner or later, meet with its proper reward. But it is well to observe also,

* See Wilkinson's Manners and Customs of Ancient Egyptians, 2d series, vol II, pp. 2, 3, 74, 75.

5th. That *many facts of every day occurrence seem to foreshadow such retribution on the evil doer.*

If this life be probationary merely, then the full administration of justice can hardly be looked for at all times; and we know that many offenders do, in fact, long enjoy impunity. And yet, if God be just and all-wise, we may reasonably expect that he will so govern the world, and so shape the course of events, as that guilt shall be evidently frowned on, and uprightness and virtue favored as a general thing. And so, in fact, we find it to be. Virtue usually insures happiness and respectability. Vice is generally productive of misery; and although, now and then, daring offenders seem to escape with entire impunity, yet most generally evil doing does, sooner or later, yield a bitter return of shame, infamy, remorse and wretchedness. No caution can elude the Omniscient Eye; no skill can control the steady movements of Providence, which work to the detection and punishment of the deeply criminal. No daring can outface justice, or prevent its sure, though it may be tardy, vengeance. The guilty perpetrator of wrong may burrow in darkness, and work his secret way by cunning stealth. It avails him only for a time. Justice may seem to slumber long and profoundly; the guilty perpetrator of secret crime may be congratulating himself on his security; years may elapse after the commission of the evil deed; the guilty one may migrate to far-distant lands, and settle in a strange place, under a strange climate, and in a society where he himself is a stranger; and yet the seeds of vengeance sown by his own hand in the very act of his evil doing, years and years agone, shall all this time be germinating, and ready to shoot up to sudden and fruitful maturity, in disease that shall waste his frame and shorten his life, or in evidence of his guilt, that, like the fast multiplying threads of a spider's web, shall be accumulating around him, and closing in upon him, and bringing on exposure, infamy, ruin, and wretchedness, complete and incurable. "*The wicked shall not be unpunished.*" God has said it, and facts occurring every day prove it true! Hide where he may, flee withersoever he may, justice sure, though tardy, dogs his footsteps, and with the certainty of fate, falls upon him in vengeance at a time and in a mode oft least expected. The grand lesson stamped upon every page of man's history is, God is just, and *retribution is certain.* For,

6th. *Man's intellectual structure prepares him for it!* As a preparation to fill responsibility there is needed, not only reason to qualify for the investigation of truth,—judgment aided by the moral sense to decide what is wrong and what right in the several emergencies of life as they arise,—together with conscience, that faculty which includes a sense of obligation to do right and to shun evil,—and also self condemnation or remorse

for evil consciously perpetrated; but there is needed also the faculty of memory, to retain the knowledge that may have been acquired. Without memory, remorse would be unfelt, and punishment must be a nullity; for the suffering included in punishment would lose its penal character if the memory of the guilt that called for it were lost. Each pang endured would be forgotton as soon as felt; the consciousness, and indeed the entire being of the sufferer, would all be concentrated in the passing instant. The future is unseen; the past, were memory extinct, must be a blank. But memory lives in every bosom, and memory cannot die. It lives beyond the death-pang and beyond the grave. "*Son, remember!*" cried the father of the faithful to the spirit of the rich man tormented in hell. "*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!*" sing the ransomed around the throne of the Lamb in heaven; plainly showing that in heaven and in hell memory still lives, and will live for ever, growing probably in clearness, in strength, and in vivacity, as rolling ages move on. The existence and the perennial vigor of memory warn us of a coming retribution, and fit also for a full appreciation of its power. It needs, then, but the presence of some adequate prompter to memory, to awaken it to life and action,—to spread before it some imperishable record of the past; and this will produce a complete recognition of every item, prepare the man to meet the full force of retribution, and thus *render that retribution certain!* But,

7th. *This imperishable record of the past, the material universe is, by the very laws of nature, so arranged as that it shall certainly furnish;* and in so doing it yields convincing evidence to establish the *certainty of retribution, full and complete, beyond the possibility of a doubt.*

For, *what the police is* in a vigilant human government, that the *very elements around us are in the government of God.* The laws of nature will, on man's last trial, furnish witness to convict him.

A rigid mathematical demonstration might be adduced to establish this fact. When you move, each foot-fall shakes the earth. When you act, you stamp the image of your emotion on your own spirit, and upon the face of the physical universe itself. When you speak, you breathe forth your own soul upon the elements, and you send it abroad bearing the impress of the passion that agitates it, subtle as thought, and indestructible as space. Our inner spirit is a self-registering instrument. The passing moments are time's leaves, each catching and retaining a history, daguerreotyped, fixed for ever,—borne on and on to the grand archives of eternity, there laid up safe in the repository of the Almighty, and constituting "*the books*" out of which men shall be judged!

Look now at the facts, and ponder them well!

Take your stand by the side of a tranquil lake. Throw into it a pebble, and mark the result. From the point where that pebble strikes the water, you see the circling ripple spread, and enlarge and widen, ripple beyond ripple, wave beyond wave until the agitated water breaks in tiny waves upon the distant banks. A little reflection will satisfy you, that as that stone sinks to the bottom of the lake, every single atom included in the entire mass of water in that lake is forced out of its place, and the whole is agitated, until each particle settles in a new position, different, both positively and relatively, from that which it held before. In like manner, when a ship founders at sea, nay, when a corpse is cast overboard into the deep, not only is the water immediately around that foundering ship, or that sinking body, agitated and displaced, but the motion extends and spreads far as ocean reaches; and it affects the waters of the ocean on its remotest shores, in its deepest estuaries, and in all the streams that empty into it, though to our imperfect perceptions that motion is *lost* long ere it reaches the nearest shore. Now, the effect of that agitation and displacement of the particles of ocean's waters must *tell* on the position and mutual relation of each particle of all those waters, and that through all coming duration. After such agitation each particle occupies a new position, different from what it previously held: on the next agitation its starting-point is different from what it would have been otherwise; its point of after subsidence and rest is therefore different; and so of the next succeeding agitation, and the next, and the next,—and so on indefinitely through all coming ages. This, then, must be one of the almost innumerable elements that enter into the problem which must be solved, if you would demonstrate the condition of things, the final result of all the influences brought to bear upon the ocean, from its first production up to the ultimate examination.

So also the air of our atmosphere is a fluid, subjected to laws analogous to those affecting all other fluids.

Sound is the effect on our organs of hearing, produced by the circling waves of air in motion. The crashing thunder, the booming of artillery, the sharp crack of the rifle, are familiar illustrations. At sea the discharge of a cannon can be heard for many miles. It agitates the air, the waters, nay, the solid earth itself. The comparatively feeble sound of yon organ's pedal bass can be not only *heard* at the distance of several furlongs, but to a person walking at a distance of some hundreds of yards, when those notes are sounded, the effect on the solid earth itself is felt in the trembling of the ground beneath his feet as he treads. Does this effect stop where man ceases to perceive it?

No, it rolls on and on, till its spirit-like echoes break on the shores of distant worlds unseen.

You raise in full chorus a hymn to the praise of God. To the ear of man that sound is lost at no very great distance; but it dies not there. The waves of sound roll on, spreading widely, and yet more widely, until they break in sweetly echoing ripples on the ear of angels; till they roll in spirit-breathing waves to the foot of the eternal throne.

The man of God retires to his closet for prayer; the sons of riot are loud in mirth and boistorous in revelry and blasphemy; in softest tones the lover breathes into the ear of the loved one the vows of affection. These words of prayer, these tones of blasphemy, or of ardent love, roll on the ever-moving waves that traverse all space, outlast all time, awaken the echoes of eternity, and they must hereafter meet the speaker, an imperishable evidence of his emotions—the undying echoes of his uttered thoughts! But if the air and the ocean be thus impressible to acts, and tenacious of the impression once made, equally so is the solid earth. If the heavings of vast earthquakes must communicate motion to each particle of the globe, so too does the spring of the tiger, and the tiny foot-fall of the infant.

Take a capacious vessel; fill it with large stones, and inspect it when carefully suspended at some distance from the ground. Ascertain its precise weight, and measure exactly its distance from the ground. Now abstract one large stone, and you at once perceive the effect. Its weight is diminished, and it rises a perceptible distance higher above the ground!

Next, place a similar vessel suspended like the other, but filled with sand; with fine dust, or with wheat flour. Ascertain precisely its weight, and its exact distance above ground. Abstract now one grain of sand, or one single particle of dust, or of the flour. Your closest scrutiny fails to detect any change in the weight of what is left in the vessel, or any change in its elevation above the earth. Yet you know with certainty that a change has been produced in both these respects, by the abstraction of even one single particle of dust. The weight is diminished and the vessel has risen, although your senses are too limited, and your finest instruments are too imperfect to enable you to measure or even to perceive the change. so, also when you throw a pebble up into the air, and it falls again, just as truly as when huge rocks, dislodged from the mountain's summit, fall crashing down Alpine gorges, motion is communicated by the concussion to every particle of the solid globe, and the earth itself vibrates in its progress along its orbit. The effect may be infinitesimal, but it is real; and its consequences on every particle of the vast globe remain for ever. The globe itself retains, through all its countless atoms, the apportioned

shares of the motion so impressed upon each one. Each single atom lies in a new position, a new point of departure for the next motion that shall be impressed upon it, and the next, and the next, through all after ages?

Each passing day, then, each striking hour, each fleeting moment, bears thus its record to the imperishable archives of eternity. These are the deposits of a man's life left in the accumulating strata of time. They are the fossil remains of man's spirit, the casts of his passions and emotions that will be disinterred in the researches of the great day!

Further still: No one thought, no one emotion dies in the memory; it becomes a part of the soul, and it is imperishable as eternity. Memory holds it all; faded it may be, ay, almost lost here; but eternity is the grand chemistry that shall bring out the secret writing, fresh as at first, indelible and eternal, and and conscience will recognize its identity.

It might at first view be supposed, that since so many various influences have been, through all time, exerted upon the waters of the sea,—as, *e. g.*, islands rising and being again submerged, ships cleaving the billows in every direction, storms sweeping over the surface of the deep,—the effect of all this must be a result so complicated, that it is as good as lost. To our limited capacity it may appear so, but in reality it is not so. The final result is made up of all the results of these several influences. No one of them is lost! Were any of them wanting, the final issue were different. One Mind there is that can and does trace all these numerous and complicated influences, and understand perfectly the final result.

So also, amid all the waves of motion affecting the air around us, the earth we tread on, and each object holding a place upon it, wave meeting wave, influence crossing influence, the determination of the final result, as that result shall be presented in the aspect of nature, in the condition of our bodies, and in that of all the several members and particles of which our body is made up, would present simply a problem of compound forces affecting a certain given quantity or condition of things. A problem far too vast and complicated for us now to solve. To God all is plain. Even to angelic minds it may present a problem not too complicated for comprehension; because, though these influences are numerous and complicated, they are not infinite, they are limited, and they may therefore be comprehended by created minds: but if so, it is at least possible—it is not indeed improbable—they may yet be comprehended by us, when in eternity the deposits of time shall be disinterred, and we shall see the successive imprints of all our several acts and thoughts in life, shall gaze on the living portrait of each emotion, and shall hear the resuscitated echo of each word we have ever uttered; for, says the Son of God

himself, "There is nothing hid that shall not be manifested;" and "What ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light."

The art of man can, even now, catch and delineate the features of our countenance, with the expression they wear at any moment, and can fix the likeness permanently there. That likeness the artist does not create; it is there already, floating in the sun-beam; the artist has merely found the means of ascertaining its existence, catching, and retaining it. So the skill of God has made the very elements his instruments, and every moment, as it flees away to join the ages past, bears with it a daguerreotyped likeness of the man, soul and body both, and fixes it forever. Every object is a plate, and the world itself is a great gallery of historical paintings, each true to the life.

Oh! when this moral chemistry, which is continually operating, has at length done its work, and the process is complete, what a task to look on the result, and there to see our life's history, in all its minutest points, depicted with unerring truth, stamped on air, on earth, on sea, and on every object around us, and stamped on the soul itself!

In the cycles of by-gone ages, the rolling floods of ante-Adamic oceans bore away and deposited beneath the comminuted wrecks of the worlds they had inhabited, race after race of former occupants of earth and its waters, and deposited them in succcessive series, layer above layer. In subsequent ages these strata of fossil races were by fresh convulsions of the globe cast up, and they are now laid bare to our inspection. They are gazed upon now, the medals of creation, as they have been felicitously designated, a palpable evidence of the life, the habits, and the condition of earth-born races, long, long since passed away!

So now the waves of time are continually bearing away, and depositing in due order, in a regular series, the *debris* of this moral world,—the impress of our thoughts, and words, and actions, borne away and deposited on the shores of eternity,—the fossils of our deeds, the buried remains of our passing existence, the imperishable evidence of the successive stages reached in our spiritual development; i. e., in the progress of our moral being, good or evil.

To use the language of another, (see Babbage, the ninth Bridgewater Treatise, Chap. IX., pp. 113, 114, 119,) who has, I find, anticipated me in this idea, which, until I met with this passage, I did really suppose had originated with myself:

"Thus considered, what a strange chaos is this wide atmosphere we breathe! Every atom, impressed with good and with ill, retains at once the motions which philosophers and sages have imparted to it, mixed and combined, in ten thousand ways, with all that is worthless and base. The air itself is one vast library, on whose pages are forever written all that man has said,

or woman whispered. There, in their mutable but unerring characters, mixed with the earliest as with the latest sighs of mortality, stand forever recorded, vows unredeemed, promises unfulfilled, perpetuated in the united movements of each particle, the testimony of man's changeful will!" And, I may add, the proof of man's guilt; and equally, also, the evidence of the sorrow of the penitent, and of the zeal and fervor of the pious.

"If the Almighty stamped on the brow of the earliest murderer the indelible and visible mark of his guilt, he has also established *laws*, by which every succeeding criminal is not less irrevocably chained to the testimony of his crime. For every atom of his mortal frame, through whatever changes its severed particles may migrate, will still retain, adhering to it through *every* combination, some movement derived from the very muscular efforts by which the crime was perpetrated."

"When man and all his race shall have disappeared from the face of our planet, ask every particle of air still floating over the unpeopled earth, and it will record the cruel mandate of the tyrant, the bitter words of unkindness, the oaths of the profane, the filthy words of the wicked. Interrogate every wave that breaks unimpeded on ten thousand desolate shores, and it will give evidence of the last gurgle of the waters which closed over the head of the dying victim of piracy, or of suicide. Confront the murderer with every corporeal atom of his immolated victim, the seducer with the victim of his baseness, and in the still quivering movements of each atom he will read the evidence of his guilt, and hear the echo of the damning charge, '*Thou art the man!*'"

Most truly then may it be averred, that the air we breathe, the loud booming of ocean's billows dashing on the sandy shore, the earth itself, and every individual particle of which its vast mass is composed, unite in corroboration of what the Son of God declares: "There is nothing hid that shall not be manifested."

Man is responsible in every act and every word, and ample and minute is the retribution awaiting him!

For: His structure, corporeal and moral both, implies it; the perfections of God his Maker demand it; the Bible unequivocally asserts it; men have always, everywhere, universally expected it, and they do now expect it. Many facts are constantly occurring, even now to foreshadow it; for the guilty has to work in secret, and vengeance, though tardy, is sure to overtake him; man's internal structure prepares him for it, since conscience foretells it, and undying memory qualifies him to meet and appreciate it; while the material universe itself is so arranged as to establish and secure it, in the preservation of evidence full in point to every fact, and that cannot be lost; for even the elements are God's ever vigilant and active police!

So that the elements amid which we dwell, the very material substance of which our bodies are composed, the roar of the restless ocean, the howl of the wintry tempest, and the softest breezes of the summer's eve, all—all proclaim it: "There is nothing hid that shall not be manifested!"

There is one thought awakened by the subject now discussed, which may well arrest our attention: *How unutterable is the worth of the blood of Christ!* The God of nature is the God who will judge us! On every particle of the material universe we inhabit, this God has impressed laws, the laws of nature, which render every atom upon us and around us, our whole life through, a witness to the truth, in every act and deed of our probationary life; the very act we do stamps upon the earth we tread and upon the air we breathe the impress of the fact, and secures the evidence of our guilt, truthful, unchanging, incorruptible, and eternal. Man's vigilance we may baffle, man's power we may elude; but Omniscience we can neither baffle nor deceive; and Almighty power we can neither resist nor flee from. Let life flow on, then, smoothly and tranquilly to its close, still judgment awaits us! Oh! my hearer, in the hour when, summoned to meet God as your judge, you look around for shelter from the gathering storms of wrath, whither will you flee? If you look to the earth on which you passed your term of probation, its every particle bears the marks of your sin, and presents evidence of your guilt! If you would breathe forth the words of entreaty on the air, the air itself rolls back upon you the thick-coming echoes of your words of folly, of sin, it may be of daring blasphemy, spoken on earth. If you would lift up your hands to deprecate the stroke of justice, every particle of matter that goes to form the substance of those hands, and of that whole body so long perverted to purposes of sin, shows the dark stains of your ill doing, the evidence of your guilt. Heaven blazes on your head with the kindling fires of justice! Hell rolls its billows, dashing and roaring hoarsely the demand for justice! Your own trembling heart groans forth its foreboding of justice! Nor heaven, earth, nor hell, yields one solitary spot secure from the desolating storm of Heaven's avenging justice—save only the Cross of Christ, and where the blood which flowed down that cross has been applied. *That blood cleanses from all sin.* That blood alone washes out the stains of guilt, stills the rolling thunders of God's vengeance, quenches the kindling fires of his wrath, and with its soft pleadings for mercy, overpowers, gently, but effectually, the rising cry of justice, of hell, and of the whole universe arrayed against the trembling offender, and demanding his condemnation! With all nature rising up in evidence against you, every material atom you have ever used, or touched, or felt, standing forth in attestation of your unworthiness, demanding your doom, and ex-

hibiting the proof, clear, full, and imperishable, of your guilt, the pledge and guarantee of your condemnation,—proof, to buy off which the wealth of both the Indies were worthless, to rebut which the learning, the wisdom, the skill, and ingenuity of men and angels combined were all impotent,—nothing, nothing but the blood of Christ will aught avail. But that blood extinguishes all this damning proof of guilt, calms the frowning face of Justice itself, shields the trembling believer from all harm, and leads him safely home to the bosom of God—the paradise of the blest!

Fellow-sinners, now—now, while yet it may avail—ere yet the storm of Heaven's wrath bursts upon your head—apply to that Saviour—trust in that precious blood—and you shall live, live forever! To you and to me, there's nothing worth a thought in comparison of the one grand inquiry: How may I find myself washed in the *blood of Christ?* Seek it now—plead for it now—trust in that blood now, and the fact that you have done so will stand forth prominent above all else, in that last awful day, when it shall be obvious to all, amid the roarings of the last conflagration, "*There is nothing hid that shall not be manifested!*" Amen!

SERMON DLI.

BY REV. D. B. COE,

SECRETARY OF THE AMERICAN HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

GAIN FROM CHRIST'S EXALTATION.

"And greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father."—JOHN 14 : 12.

THE great crisis of our Saviour's history has at length arived. His enemies have bribed one of his professional friends to deliver his Master into their hands, and under cover of night they have already assembled, with the traitor at their head, to arrest the innocent victim. He well knows their designs, and sees that "the hour has come." But while his enemies are preparing their torches and arms, determined that he shall escape their hands no longer, how is the Saviour himself occupied? In arming his friends to resist the expected assault? No! In planning measures for his escape? No! He is administering comfort and encouragement to his disconsolate followers. For the last time he had eaten with them the feast of the passover, and had instituted an ordinance to commemorate his death. He had then announced distinctly his approaching departure. They are overwhelmed with sorrow. What can they do without their beloved master? They are few in number, humble in rank, despised and persecuted by their countrymen; and if their Saviour is taken away, the shout of triumph will be raised over his grave, and his cause will be buried with him. No wonder they are disconsolate, for they cannot comprehend the meaning of this unexpected bereavement. Christ, therefore, though in full view of his coming agonies, proceeds kindly to impart consolation to them: "*Let not your heart be troubled.*"

He first points to the mansions in heaven which he is going to prepare for them, and then assures them, that though he is about to depart, his cause shall survive. Nay, by the fact of his departure his cause shall gain new strength. I go to do more for it in heaven than I could do on earth; and through the aid which I will impart, each one of my followers shall be able to accomplish more than I should do if I should remain. "He that believeth on me, the works which I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father."

Wonderful words! Some have not dared to believe them in

their plain and obvious meaning, and therefore have restricted their application to the working of miracles. They would have us believe that Christ meant simply to assure his disciples that they should work greater *miracles* than he had wrought. But the promise in this sense was not fulfilled. No miracles were or could be greater than those which Jesus wrought. "He made the dumb to sing his praises, the lame to leap for joy, the deaf to hear his wonders, the blind to see his glory." The winds were hushed, the sea was calmed, demons fled, water became wine, the hungry were filled, the trees withered, the dead revived, at his omnipotent word. And when he is laid in the grave, where, to mere mortals, there is no more work, he performs his crowning wonder. He throws off the cerements of the tomb, bursts away the barricade of rock, and walks forth a conqueror. What mightier works than these did his disciples perform? But it is said that, while Jesus wrought his miracles by words, Peter's shadow was made to heal the sick, and Paul's handkerchief to cast out devils. So, I answer, the Saviour's touch, and even the hem of his garment, did the same things.

But that Christ did not refer to the working of miracles by his disciples, is evident also from the fact that this was not the comfort they sought. What they wanted most of all, was the assurance of the success of the Saviour's cause, and of his presence and aid *for that end*. Whether this aid were afforded in the form of miraculous gifts, or of strength to endure temptation and to resist enemies, they cared not, if only the cause of their blessed Master might triumph. It was in reference to this, doubtless, that Christ meant to comfort and encourage them. He would have them understand that his death would be no detriment to his cause. On the contrary, from that moment its greatest triumphs should commence. They should be able to do more without his personal presence than they had done with it. Even the humblest believer in him should have greater success in the work of saving lost men than had attended his own labors. Does any one say that the expression, "greater works," is more descriptive of the working of miracles than of the conversion of sinners? I answer, No. It was a great work to stop the orbs of heaven in their course, as did Joshua; but it is a greater work to arrest in his career of guilt a self-destroying sinner. It is a great work to kindle a fire from heaven upon an altar of wood, as did Elijah; but it is a greater work to kindle the fire of Christian love upon a sinner's heart. It is a great work to raise a dead body to life, as Christ raised Lazarus; but it is a greater work to quicken with spiritual life a soul dead in trespasses and sins. There is no greater work on earth or in heaven than the conversion of a soul.

If this be the import of Christ's promise, then it was most

signally fulfilled. The narrative of his personal ministry is remarkable. Though he spake as never man spake; though the most sublime and affecting truths were continually falling from his lips; though he opened to the world exhaustless treasures of spiritual knowledge; yet how few seem to have been converted under his ministry! His sermons often excited wonder and admiration, but oftener the rage and abuse of his hearers. His first public discourse, in the synagogue of his native town, roused the fury of his fellow-townsmen, and they strove to kill him. His sublime and wonderful Sermon on the Mount excited much astonishment, but we know not that any were converted under it. Matthew concludes his record of the discourse with this single remark; "The people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." You may examine the record of all our Saviour's teachings, and you will find that those truths which, in modern times, have proved the power of God to the salvation of multitudes, produced, when first announced from the Saviour's own lips, almost no effect. His public ministry continued about three years. During this time he labored incessantly; preached frequently, and to vast multitudes; and enforced his doctrines by his many miracles of mercy, and his spotless life. Besides this, his twelve disciples and the seventy other brethren had been preaching and working miracles through the country. And yet, at the time of his ascension, the number of believers seems to have been small. For on so important an occasion as the election of an apostle, and afterwards at the pentecostal prayer-meeting, only one hundred and twenty disciples assembled at Jerusalem, though it was at one of the great festival gatherings of the Jewish nation. This seems to indicate that the number of Christ's followers was not yet large.

But he has now ascended to the Father, and behold the fulfillment of the promise. Behold the "greater works" which he foretold. Peter stands up on the very spot where Christ had often preached in vain, and his words are "fire and hammer." The stubborn hearts of the Saviour's murderers melt beneath the burning words of the preacher, like wax before the flame. Three thousand—a greater number probably than Christ and his eighty-two assistant preachers had gathered during their whole ministry—three thousand souls were converted under that one sermon; and in a very short time the number was increased to five thousand. Surely these were greater works than Christ performed.

So it was afterwards; till, within thirty years, the standard of Christianity had been planted in almost every province of the then known world. So has it been from that day to this. Witness the glorious results which have ever attended the dispen-

sation of the pure Word of God. Witness the achievements of the Reformers. Luther drags forth the Bible from the dusty alcoves of the cloister, proclaims its truths in his native tongue, and all Europe starts from its sleep of ages. In later years, Whitefield and Wesley blew the trumpet of the gospel with a distincter sound, and with glorious success. In our own country, the preaching of Davies, Edwards, and the Tennents produced such results, that the world cried, in amazement, "Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?' Witness, too, the results of revivals in our own day, and the wonderful success of missions in pagan lands. Surely Christ never produced results like these. His promise to his disciples has been signally fulfilled. They have achieved, and are destined yet to achieve, in his vineyard, greater works than his.

II. Now let us examine the reason which Christ gives for this remarkable declaration: "*Because I go unto my Father.*" What connection had this exaltation with the performance of these greater works by his followers? I answer:

1. *It afforded additional evidence of his Messiahship.*

The Jews expected that, by putting Christ to a violent death, they should convince all that he was a mere man and an impostor; that he was not therefore the expected Messiah. Hence their desperate determination to murder him. They *did* murder him; and in that sealed and barricaded sepulchre, where they thought to bury with him every vestige of his claim to the Messiahship, they beheld the crowning proof of his divinity. He bursts his tomb, and walks forth, death's conqueror, and therefore heaven's King and earth's Redeemer. He appears to many, instructs and counsels his disciples, then vanishes before their eyes in the clouds of heaven.

Here is a new truth, a new argument, a new weapon. Christ liveth; therefore he is the Messiah, and you, his murderers, have crucified the Lord of glory. Christ liveth; therefore his glorious promises and terrific threatenings are true; he liveth to execute them. Christ liveth; therefore we shall live and rise to meet him. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." These were the new and victorious truths with which the apostles went forth to the conquest of the world. With tremendous effect did they wield them. Jesus Christ was declared, says Paul, to be the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead: and this mighty truth, the bequest of the risen and ascended Saviour, has ever been an important element of the power and instrument of the success of his gospel, from that day to this.

2. Christ's followers were enabled to do greater works than his, *through aid of his intercession.*

He alluded to this, among the words of comfort which ac-

company our text: "I will pray the Father for you." And what wonder that, with such an intercessor, the Christian should be so mighty in his Master's service? The promise is, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." What though we are weak and erring? What though our prayers are so imperfect? What though we lift to heaven hands all stained with sin? We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, whom the Father heareth always; and with such a friend at court, our cause is safe. The resources of Omnipotence are placed at our disposal, and we are strong *in the Lord*, and in the power of his might.

3. Christ's followers are enabled to do greater works than his, *through the aid of the Holy Spirit, which he has given them.*

"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Mark these words: "It is expedient *for you*"—not for *me* only, but for *you*. It is better for you that I should go. I leave you for your good. I leave you that you may have in my stead the Holy Ghost, whose presence will be more available to you than mine. The Comforter could not properly commence his peculiar work till the atonement was completed, and Christ had left the world. Great, then, as was the value of Christ's society to his followers, it was expedient that he should leave them, and that the Spirit should come in his stead. They gained greatly by the exchange, for, the moment the Spirit came, they commenced their "greater works." Truth was armed with new power; Satan fell as lightning from heaven; the temples of Paganism were overthrown; her oracles became dumb; and the stone hewn out of the mountain without hands commenced growing to that great mountain which shall yet fill the whole earth.

We think it would be a precious privilege, if we could have the Saviour walking our streets as once he walked the streets of Judea; if we could worship with him in the sanctuary, and in the place of social prayer; if he could enter our dwellings and bow with us at the family altar; if we could listen to his counsels and instructions, and receive his gracious benediction. But not if the Spirit must leave us. If we can have but *one*, let us have the blessed Comforter, in whose presence and power is the only hope of this lost world. He it is that cheers the fainting heart, that confirms the tottering steps, that wipes the weeping eye, that guides the wandering feet. He it is that gives to the Word of God its conquering power, and melts before it the stoutest heart into penitence and love. Oh! how precious is this, the Saviour's parting gift! He is indeed a Comforter—*the* Comforter. In him is our strength, our hope, our victory.

4. "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father." This is true again, because, *when Christ went to his*

Father, he was exalted to the headship and kingship of his Church. This relationship is thus described in the glowing language of Paul: "And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Christ then is our head; we act as his agents; our works are his works. But he works now, not as when he was on earth, as a man clothed with human weakness and infirmity, but as a throned and reigning King. The Father has said to him: "Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." "He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet." Through us, his humble followers, this conquest is to be achieved. It is for this that he has given us the power of doing these "greater works." For this, he enables one to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight. For this he has given us the Church, with all its mighty agencies of good. For this, he has given us the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. For this, he has given us prayer, the key of Heaven's exhaustless treasury. For this, the heavenly Dove is sent to hover over us, and descend with converting and sanctifying power upon the hearts of men. For this, angels are ministering spirits, aiding us in our work. Oh! it is the greatest, the most glorious work ever undertaken in our world. We, the humble followers of Christ, have it to do; and with his promised help we shall do it. Our success is certain; our victory is sure. "I, the Lord will hasten it in his time."

Now, if Christ's followers are invested with such powers, then.

1st. *It is plainly our fault that so little is accomplished.*

When the promise in our text began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when one sermon was the instrument of three thousand immediate conversions, and when a few more added two thousand to this number, it must have seemed to those who beheld those wonderful achievements of the Galilean fishermen, that nothing could prevent the speedy, universal triumph of the gospel. Within thirty years from that time, one might have said, in surveying their labors, "At this rate, not two centuries will elapse, before the whole world will be converted to Christ!" But, oh! how different has been the result! Eighteen centuries have poured their mighty tide of immortal souls into the gulf of despair, and the Prince of this world has the immense majority yet. During half of this time the Church has been in a dead sleep. And since she was awakened by the morning clarion of the Reformation, how slow has been her march! With the resources of the reigning Saviour and the converting

Spirit in her hand, how little has she done! Here and there one, conscious of his power, or of God's power in him, has done battle gloriously in this cause; but, as a whole, how little has the Church accomplished! How little is she doing now! Now and then a scattered few in the ranks arouse themselves, and strive manfully for a season, and hundreds flock to the standard of the cross, showing what "mighty works" they can do if they will; but then they drop to sleep again, and the enemy prevails.

Look at the Church at the present moment. She has wealth, talent, numbers, the Saviour's commission and instructions, the Spirit's presence and aid,—all that Christ has promised, all she will ever have; and yet, is she fulfilling her mission? Is she doing her work? Is she hastening to take possession of the earth for her King? No! she is standing nearly still. In some portions of the field she is even going *backward*, and the enemy is gaining ground upon her. Shame, shame on the soldiers who retreat, with such a Leader and in such a cause! Why should it be so? Why should the head clad with the helmet of salvation droop and nod at the post of duty? Why should the hands that bear the shield of faith hang down in apathy? Why should the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel retreat before its foes? Are we not faithless to our Leader, and recreant to our high trust? How can the Saviour ever fulfill his glorious design with such followers? Were it not for his immutable *promise*, we should expect that he would drive us all from the field, and from the very stones raise up children unto Abraham. Oh! it is a fearful thing to enjoy such privileges, to possess such resources, to be intrusted with such interests, and yet to be accomplishing so little for Christ and a dying world!

Finally, *In the promise of Christ to his followers, they may find unfailing ground of encouragement.*

Amid the dust and heat of the conflict in the Church militant, we are too apt to look down to earth, and, seeing so many enemies, and difficulties, and hardships, so much work to be done, and so few coming to our help, to become discouraged, and faint. This we must not do. And that we may not do it, we should look *up*—up to the throne of our risen and exalted Saviour, our Captain, our Intercessor, our conquering King. This the great apostle did, and it nerved him anew for his conflict. This he exhorts others to do, and it will have the same effect upon them. After enumerating that glorious constellation of departed worthies, who, from their high seats, are witnessing our conflict,—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barek, Samson, Jephthah, David, and the prophets,—he exclaims: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of wit-

nesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." *Looking unto Jesus!* Here is the crowning encouragement. Let it cheer and sustain you in all your labors, and amid all your discouragements. Looking unto Jesus as your *advocate*, presenting your humble prayers perfumed with the incense of his own sacrifice, and strengthened by his own availing intercession. Looking unto Jesus as the bestower of the *Comforter*, that almighty helper, whose aid is the pledge of our complete success. Looking unto Jesus as head over all things to the Church; as enlisted with you, therefore, to subdue all things to himself. With his eye turned upward to such a Saviour, how can a Christian faint or be disheartened? There is not a more appropriate watchword, or a more effectual stimulus to Christian effort and prayer, than *looking unto Jesus.*

It appears then, my brethren, that, furnished as we are with such auxiliaries and encouragements, we can accomplish far more for the salvation of men and the honor of God than we are accomplishing, more than we ever have accomplished, more than has ever been accomplished, at least since apostolic days. It must be so. The promise of Christ proves it so. The world will never be converted, if it is not so. Zion must put on new strength, and her march must be attended with more rapid success, or the day of millennial glory will never dawn upon our world. Not that any new agencies are to be employed, or any new measures devised. We have all the resources, all the facilities, all the instruments that we shall ever have, and all that we need. But in those same old agencies, the preaching of the gospel, prayer, holy example, Christian liberality, zeal, self-denial, there is a wonder-working power which we have not yet developed nor discovered. It is latent. If we will but employ these agencies as we ought—do our best with them—we shall be astonished at our success; and the miracles of primitive times will be forgotten, amid the grander miracles of converting grace which we shall witness. My brethren, let us make the experiment, and see what will be the result. Let us bring all these tithes into the store house—labor, self-denial, faith, prayer—and see what miracles of power and glory will be wrought among us. Let us do it for the sake of him who has intrusted these resources to our use. Let us do it for the multitudes around us, and for a world perishing in sin. Let us do it for our own spiritual profit, and for that crown of glory that fadeth not away.

ABSENCE FROM GOD.

My God, my Maker, I have called thee my all-satisfying portion, and my eternal good. When I contemplate thee, I stand amazed at thy grandeur; thy wisdom, thy power, thy fullness of blessing, wrap my soul up in astonishment and devout silence. In that happy moment my soul cries out, "What are creatures when compared with thee, but mere shadows of being, the faint reflections of thy light and beauty!" And yet, stupid as I am, I soon lose my sight of God, and stand gazing upon thy creatures all the day, as if beauty and light were theirs in the original.

What are they all, O my God, but empty cisterns that can give no relief to a thirsty soul, unless thou supply them with rivulets from on high? And yet we crowd about these cisterns and are attached to them, as though they were the unfailing springs and fountains of our blessedness. Every breath we draw is a new and unmerited gift from heaven; and yet we are contented to spend that life far from heaven and from God, and to dwell afar off from him, amidst the regions of mortality and death; we are ever groveling in this land of graves, as though immortal blessings were to be drawn from the clods of it.

Our real and eternal interests depend more on thy single favor, than on the united friendship of the whole creation; and yet, foolish wanderers that we are, we absent ourselves from our God, and rove far and wide to seek interests and friendships among creatures whose character is weakness, vanity, and disappointed vexation. How fond are we of a word, a look from a worm in high station! How do we caress them and court their love, at the expense of virtue and truth, and the favor of God our maker! And yet they are nothing without God, but he is our all without their leave.

Should my father and my mother, and every mortal friend forsake me, and every good angel take his flight; should these heavens and this earth, with all their innumerable inhabitants, disappear at once, and vanish into their first nothingness; thy presence with me is all-sufficient, thy hand would support my being, and thy love would furnish out an eternity of life and coeval happiness. Why, then, do I tie myself so fast to my mortal friends, as though my separation from them was certain misery? Why do I lean upon creatures with my whole weight, as though nothing else could support me?

O my God! I am convinced that I have more affairs, and of far higher importance, to transact with thee, than with all thy creatures, and yet I am ever chattering with thy creatures, and say little to my God; or at best give him a morning or an

evening salutation, and perhaps, too, with indolence and formality. Whom have I in heaven or on earth but thee, that can supply all my wants, and fill up all the vacancies of my heart? And yet how are my thoughts and hours busily employed in quest of satisfaction among the shining snares, or at best among the flattering impertinences of the world; though every new experiment shows me they are all unsatisfying! If I happen to find any thing here below made a channel to convey some blessing to me from thy hand, how prone am I to make an idol of it, and place it in the room of my God!

How much, alas! do I trust to my food to nourish, and physic to heal me! but it is thou alone that can bless me with ease, nourishment, and health, while I dwell in this cottage of flesh and blood. Let medicines and physicians pronounce despair and death upon me, a word of thine can shut the mouth of the grave, can renew the vigor and bloom of youth, and repair the decays of nature. If thou withhold the vital influence, my flesh languishes and expires, even among luxurious provisions of the table, and the recipes of the learned; and it is thou only that can provide me a blissful habitation when this cottage is fallen to the ground. Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit, when it is dislodged from this mortal tabernacle; and why should I not keep my spirit ever near thee, since every moment I am liable to be turned out of this dwelling, and sent a naked stranger into the unknown world of spirits?

It is but a few days and nights more that I can have to do with sun, moon, and stars; a little time will finish all my commerce with this visible world; but I have affairs of infinite and everlasting moment to transact with the great God. It is before thy tribunal I must stand as the final Judge of all my conduct, from whose decisive sentence there is no appeal; and yet how fond am I, and wretchedly solicitous, to approve myself rather to creatures, whose opinion and sentence is but empty air. It is by thy judgment that I must stand or fall for ever; the words of thy lips will be my eternal bliss, or my everlasting woe; why then should I, a little insect, or atom of being be concerned about the smiles or frowns of my fellow insects, my equal atoms? Can all their applauses or their reproaches weigh a grain in the divine balance, that sacred and tremendous balance of justice, in which all my actions and my soul itself must be weighed? Let all the creatures above and below frown and scowl upon me; if my Creator smile, I am happy; nor can all their frownings diminish my complete joy,

Forgive, gracious God, forgive the past follies and wanderings of a sinful worm from thee, the highest and the best of beings. I am even amazed at my own stupidity, that I could live so much absent from thee, when my eternal all depends

upon thee. Oh, may the little remnant of my days be spent in the presence of my God; and when I am constrained to converse with creatures, let me ever remember that I have infinitely more to do with my Creator, and thus shorten my talk and traffic with them, that I may have leisure to converse the longer with thee. Let me see thee in every thing; let me read thy name every where; sounds, shapes, colors, motions, and all visible things, let them all teach me an invisible God.

ACCESS TO GOD.

However early in the morning you seek the gate of access, you find it already open; and however deep the midnight moment when you find yourself in the sudden arms of death, the winged prayer can bring an instant Saviour near. And this wherever you are. It needs not that you should enter some awful shrine, or put off your shoes on some holy ground. Could a memento be reared on every spot from which an acceptable prayer has passed away, and on which a prompt answer has come down, we should find *Jehovah-shammah*, "the Lord hath been here," inscribed on many a cottage hearth and many a dungeon floor. We should find it not only in Jerusalem's proud temple and David's cedar galleries, but in the fisherman's cottage by the brink of Gennesaret, and in the upper chamber where Pentecost began. And whether it be the field where Isaac went to meditate, or the rocky knoll where Jacob lay down to sleep, or the brook where Israel wrestled, or the den where Daniel gazed on the hungry lions and the lions gazed on him, or the hill-sides where the Man of Sorrows prayed all night, we should still discern the prints of the ladder's feet let down from heaven—the landing-place of mercies, because the starting-point of prayer. And all this whatsoever you are. It needs no saint, no proficient in piety, no adept in eloquent language, no dignity of earthly rank. It needs but a simple Hannah, or a lisping Samuel. It needs but a blind beggar, or a loathsome lazar. It needs but a penitent publican, or a dying thief. And it needs no sharp ordeal, no costly passport, no painful expiation to bring you to the mercy-seat; or rather, I should say, it needs the costliest of all: but the blood of atonement—the Saviour's merit—the name of Jesus, priceless as they are, cost the sinner nothing. They are freely put at his disposal, and instantly and constantly he may use them. This access to God in every place, at every moment, without any price or personal merit, is it not a privilege?—*Rev. James Hamilton.*

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 8, Vol. XXV.] AUGUST, 1851. [Whole No. 296.

SERMON DLII.

BY REV. G. A. LINTNER, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, SCHOHARIE, N .Y.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS IN REFERENCE TO LEGAL PROSECUTIONS.

"But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded."—1 Cor. 6: 6, 7.

It is the duty of Christians to "submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." God has appointed magistrates to rule over us in righteousness. It is his design that they should preserve the peace and order of civil society, protect the innocent, justify the righteous, and restrain evil-doers; and it is the duty of Christians to yield a ready and cheerful submission to the civil authority for these purposes. When we enter the Church of Jesus Christ, and place ourselves under the government of a spiritual kingdom, we do not cast off the obligations of obedience to the civil law. Christians should always evince a high respect for the government; they should set an example of obedience to the law of the land. There is no Christian principle or doctrine that interferes with the just claims of civil government, or that exonerates us, in any sense or in any degree, from the duty we owe to the civil magistrate.

But this is no reason why we should forsake the principles of religion, and resort to the law, in cases of difference between us and our Christian brethren, which should be settled in a religious manner. The Church is an institution founded on the high-

est principles of practical Christianity, in which all differences are to be settled by appealing to these principles, as they are revealed in the spirit and example of the Saviour of Christ and His apostles. And no people of Christ can consistently with his Christian temper go to law with his brethren before the civil magistrate—which is, even if nothing to the purpose, and cannot be a satisfactory reason to a man who is unbeliever.

The [illegible] passages connected with this subject are [illegible] a light of [illegible] Christ [illegible] before men. Now there is [illegible] you have ye go [illegible] rather take [illegible] be defrauded?

In the further [illegible] We shall [illegible]

1. *The Christian* [illegible] *all*

2. *Love* [illegible] *not*

The whole of this [illegible] Christians. Paul re- [illegible] He represents [illegible] vis- [illegible] turned in [illegible] evil [illegible] and [illegible] of Christ [illegible] He [illegible] as a [illegible] re- [illegible] not [illegible] the Christian [illegible] which [illegible] pos- [illegible] re- [illegible] Is it [illegible] that [illegible] with [illegible] of

the apostle; language which expresses in the strongest terms his abhorrence of the conduct of those members of the Church who prosecuted their brethren before the civil magistrate, and brought this reproach upon the Christian religion.

The Church of Christ is designed to be an association of kindred spirits, where all variance, and strife, and dissensions, and bitterness, and wrath are to be excluded; where all are to be united in sentiment and feeling, and regard and treat each other as brethren. And where there is such a spirit, such a union of hearts, there will be no *disposition* to create disputes and stir up contentions. But it is to be lamented that the Church, which should always exhibit her principles in the conduct of her members, is not exempt from these evils. Christ says, "It must needs be that offenses come." He knew that none of his disciples was entirely free from the remnants of sin in their hearts, and that grievances would arise in his Church. He therefore warns us against these offenses, that when they do come, we may meet them in the right spirit, and avert the disasters with which they threaten us. We are to avoid all such offenses, as tending to disunion and strife among Christian brethren. We are to guard against them, as far as may be in our power. But when they come, we are to treat them as unavoidable and almost necessary evils, connected with the imperfection and corruption of our nature, and endeavor to remove them in the most speedy and effectual manner.

How is this to be done? How are the differences between Christian brethren to be treated? How are they to be settled, so as to prevent the unhappy and fatal consequences which so often result from them? We answer, by *Christian arbitration.* If the matter in dispute cannot be settled among the parties themselves, they should be referred to the judgment and decision of brethren in the church. This is the law of Christ. He directs: "If any brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him of his fault between him and thee alone. If he shall hear thee, then thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church." This is the rule of Christ, which his disciples are to follow in all cases of difference between them. They are first to try to settle their grievances among themselves, and if they cannot succeed in this way, which of all others is the best and most effectual, they are to make their appeal to the *church*, and no other tribunal. Christ speaks of no other appeal. In all this direction, which is so very minute, and was doubtless designed to cover all cases of difficulty between his disciples, Christ says not a word that can justify an appeal to the civil magistrate. He gives not the least intima-

tion that Christians should ever resort to the law, in cases of difference with their brethren. On the contrary, he expressly prohibits such an appeal, and directs that such cases should be settled in the church, according to the principles and spirit of the gospel. The church is to hear, consider, and decide; and in no case is the matter to be taken out of the hands of the church and carried before the civil magistrate, to the dishonor of religion, and the disgrace and injury of the parties concerned.

The same direction is given by the inspired apostle in connection with the text. He teaches, that it is the duty of Christians to abstain from all legal prosecutions, and refer their differences to the *arbitration of their Christian brethren.* And he does so, upon the ground that Christians are *best qualified* to judge between their brethren, and settle their controversies. They are the proper and competent judges in all such cases; for, says the apostle, "do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" They are to sit with Christ on his throne, and by their principles and testimony, the decision in the great day of final account, when all the world shall be judged before God, is to be made. And if they are competent to determine matters of the highest importance, in a spiritual sense,—if they have that wisdom which is from above, and surpasses all other wisdom,—shall they not be considered competent to determine those small secular matters which divide the hearts of Christian brethren, and set them at variance? When God has in a certain sense committed to them the judgment of the angels,—when he has enabled them by a spiritual and divine influence to determine the state and condition of an order of beings so far above them,—will he not also enable them to form a correct judgment of their equals, and decide matters which concern them? And in view of this, the high and holy character which Christians should always sustain, and the exalted destiny which awaits them, he asks, "Is there not a wise man among you, that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" And to take away all pretense for refusing the judgment of their brethren, for the want of wisdom which some might allege, the apostle asserts that those even who are least esteemed in the church are capable of judging, and ought to be considered competent to decide such matters; and that in rejecting the judgment of the humblest individual among them, if he was a true Christian, they did wrong, and subjected religion to the contempt of its enemies.

This is the doctrine of the apostle,—a doctrine which he taught for all the churches. He inculcates a principle essentially connected with the interests of religion, and the usefulness and prosperity of every church. He shows that Christians are bound by their religious obligations to submit all matters of difference, which cannot be arranged among themselves, to the ar-

bitration of their brethren in the church: and that when they go to law with one another, they dishonor themselves and inflict a deep wound on religion; that such a proceeding on the part of a Christian, by whatever reasons he may seek to justify himself, is wrong, and cannot be reconciled with the spirit and principles by which he professes to be governed. This is what the apostle teaches. And here we may stop, and say it is sufficient for us to know the will of God on this subject, as revealed to us in the Scriptures; for when we know the will of God, we are to abide by it, without any further reason or argument. It is enough for us to know, that when a professing Christian goes to law with his brother, he goes contrary to the will of God clearly expressed in his Word. He breaks his covenant vows, and violates his sacred engagements and duties as a member of the Church of Christ. But we will go a step further, and show that there are strong and weighty reasons—reasons which we consider binding on the conscience of every Christian—why he should not go to law with his brother.

1. *It is contrary to the spirit and precepts of the Gospel.* The instructions of Christ and the apostle, as we have already stated, must be regarded as conclusive on this subject. They forbid Christians to resort to civil prosecutions against each other; and had Christ and his apostles left no other command on record, the authority to which we have referred would be sufficient to show that such a proceeding is contrary to the precepts of the gospel. But there are other commands and precepts, equally binding and conclusive. Christ enjoins it on his disciples, as a universal and fundamental law of his kingdom, that they should *love one another.* "A new commandment I give you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." He called this precept the new commandment, because it is the great and distinguishing precept of the gospel, which Christians must observe as a mark of their profession. And he adds, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." This love, which Christians are to bear to each other, is the test of their Christian character, and this test must be exhibited by every individual, and in every church, professing Christ and his religion. Where this love is wanting, the evidence, the power, the life of religion is wanting. Hence the importance of this precept, and the indispensable necessity of Christians conforming to it, that they may show themselves approved unto God, and exhibit before the world an evidence that they are brethren, united by the sacred bonds of a spiritual and holy fellowship. The apostle says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." (Eph. iv: 31, 32.)

"I beseech you, brethren, that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. i: 10.) "Brethren, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you." (2 Cor. xiii: 11.) Such are the precepts of the gospel, and the spirit of the gospel corresponds with these precepts. It is a gospel of peace, it breathes a spirit of peace, and inculcates this blessed and heavenly spirit on the mind of every Christian. And no man can be a Christian, unless he is a man of peace, and cherishes this holy and heavenly principle in his heart. When a man cherishes this principle, when he is actuated by a spirit of love toward his Christian brother, he will feel no disposition to appear against him in a court of law, to injure him, either in his character or his property.

This brings to my recollection an instance of two neighbors settling a difficulty in a truly religious manner. While one was absent from home, the other burned a piece of land which he was clearing. The fire passed into his neighbor's woods, and notwithstanding all his efforts to arrest its progress, it destroyed a valuable portion of the woods. Upon the arrival of the injured neighbor at home, the other went to him, and said, "Neighbor, the fire from my field entered your woods. I did all I could to prevent it, but could not stop it until it had destroyed much of your valuable timber, and I have come to propose to you, that we choose two men to go and examine the injury, and whatever they say, I will pay you, without any further trouble or expense." "Well," said the other, "I do not know that we can choose any two better men than ourselves to settle this matter." "Very well," said the first, "make your proposition; I will see whether I can agree to it." "Neighbor," said the injured party, "the damage I have sustained was not owing to your neglect. It is a misfortune, which in the providence of God has befallen me; you could not help it. I should consider it wrong to take a cent from you. Let us say no more about it, and be friends, as we have always been." Here we see the spirit of true Christians manifested. What a lovely, forgiving, noble, disinterested spirit! And how different is this from that spirit which is always ready to go to law; that selfish, wordly and revengeful spirit, which seeks only to gratify itself, and injure others.

2. *It brings strife and contention into the Church.* The union and harmony of the Church is a very important matter, a matter that should be well considered by its members. It is to be lamented that by many it is so little considered, and that for trifling causes this harmony is permitted to be disturbed, and discord and contention introduced among the members of Christ's body, which ought to be one heart and one soul. God looks upon the peace and harmony of his Church as a matter of so much impor-

tance, that he has denounced his severest judgments against those who shall be guilty of disturbing it. Christ has said, "Wo to that man through whom the offence cometh. It would have been better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea," than that he should be the means of bringing such an offence into the Church. It is the will and design of God that Christians should dwell together in "the unity of the Spirit, and the bonds of peace." This is one of the great purposes for which he has instituted his Church on the earth. And God sets such a high value on the peace and unity of the Church, that he has directed his servants to "mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them." The apostle also charges the members of the Church, that "there be no divisions among them," and that they should avoid every thing that would lead to contention and strife; and that if there were any among them that were disposed to create divisions, they should not be tolerated. And there is nothing which causes so much variance among Christians, and so much bitter feeling in a church, as legal prosecutions. They destroy the friendship of families, and the kind feelings between neighbors, who have lived in peace and harmony for years; they cause breaches which are never healed in this world. There is nothing which so soon breaks up the fellowship of churches, and alienates the hearts of Christians from each other, so that they cannot be reconciled. These are the sad effects of the spirit of litigation, when it enters the church. It sets brother against brother, family against family, and is such a contagious poison, that it soon spreads over the whole church with its corrupting and deadening influence.

3. *It dishonors Christ and religion.* The honor of Christ is closely connected with the conduct of every professing Christian. If he lives up to his profession, and leads a holy life, Christ is honored. He is honored by the consistent conduct of his disciple, by his efforts to do good, by the blessed influence he exerts, and the precious example he exhibits before the world. But, if he is not consistent in his conduct, if he disregards the obligations of religion, and sets a bad example, and exerts an evil influence, Christ is dishonored, the cause of religion injured, and the prejudices of the world against it increased and strengthened. This is the invariable effect of the unworthy conduct of professing Christians. It dishonors Christ, opens the mouth of gainsayers, casts stumbling-blocks in the way of sinners, and prevents them from embracing a religion which has been thus dishonored and abused.

This is so in all cases where Christians dishonor their profession, but more especially when they bring their disputes before the world, into courts of law, and show their unchristian temper in public trials, where, of all places, it should be least exhibited.

For we have sufficient evil in our hearts, and men see enough of it in our daily walk, without making a public exhibition of ourselves in a court of justice. When we enter there, we lay aside our religious character; renounce our principles of love and communion, and fellowship with our brethren. We declare before the world that we have no confidence in those principles. We come down from the high and holy ground which we have assumed, and put ourselves on a level with the open enemies of religion, who have always treated our principles and professions with contempt. And need we wonder, when professing Christians place themselves in such a position, that the enemies of religion should rejoice; that they should feel themselves encouraged, and consider it a great triumph? Is it not astonishing that men who have any respect for themselves, or regard for religion, should be willing to sacrifice their own honor, and the honor of religion, for the sake of gratifying a little selfish feeling, or gaining some trifling wordly advantage?

4. *It tends to the destruction of souls.* It is very unfortunate for many professors of religion, that they are so much governed by what they conceive to be their worldly interest, and lose sight of their spiritual interest. They are often prompted by their worldly feelings to do what their religious interests, if they were properly understood and regarded, would forbid them to do. They suffer themselves to be carried away by their worldly propensities, without considering the injury they are doing to their own souls and the souls of others. Thus they are tempted to go to law, because they consider it their interest. And if you endeavor to convince them that it is their Christian duty to keep out of the law, and rather suffer wrong than injure their souls and bring reproach on the Christian profession, they are ready to say, "I have been injured; I have been deprived of my rights, and I can not let this matter rest; I must have satisfaction and appeal to the law, for the law only gives me redress. If I do not resort to the law, I must be deprived of my rights, and suffer myself to be injured and defrauded." What then? Suppose you are injured. Is it not better to be injured in your property than in your soul? Would it not be much better for you to lose a little property than to lose your soul? Has Christ not taught you that it is better to *suffer* wrong than *do* wrong? Has he not told you that you ought rather to take wrong and suffer yourself to be defrauded than to go to law with your brother? Has he not made it your Christian duty to make a sacrifice of your worldly interests for the sake of promoting the interests of religion? And will you refuse to make this sacrifice; or rather, will you sacrifice the interests of religion for the sake of your worldly interests? Do you really think that it is your interest ever to violate the obligations of religion? If you do, you are

laboring under a great mistake. Your interest as a Christian is to act like a Christian, live like a Christian, and avoid every temptation to sin, and every appearance of evil, and engage in nothing that may prove a snare to your own soul or the souls of your brethren. When, as a Christian, you are called to suffer wrong, it is your interest to do so; to bear the cross and despise the shame; to endure the mortification, and not think strange of it. Did not Christ suffer wrong? And should not you be willing to suffer it for the sake of following his example? Do you think it would injure you to follow the example of Christ? No Christian was ever injured by suffering wrong, forgiving injuries, or doing good when he was tempted to do evil. But, oh! how many have been injured by yielding to temptation to do wrong; by indulging in unforgiving dispositions, gratifying revengeful feelings, and following what they considered their worldly interests! How many souls have been destroyed in this way, and what multitudes are still led away by this delusion which Satan has so long practised on the minds of men!

From the views and arguments that have been presented, it must appear evident,

1. *That it is manifestly wrong for professors of religion to go to law against each other, and that it is an evil which should be discountenanced by every Christian.* If Christians are to love and treat each other as brethren; if they are not to offend, not to injure each other; and if by their conduct towards one another before the world they are to evince their mutual love and regard; then, surely, it is wrong ever to place themselves in a situation in which they must appear as enemies, who are endeavoring to injure and persecute each other. When professors of religion place themselves in such an attitude, they contradict all their professions of love and attachment for one another. They set at naught all the counsels and admonitions which Christ has given them, and they destroy that good and virtuous influence which they might exert in the Church and upon the world. A Christian arrayed in open hostility against another Christian in a court of law, in a contest before the world, where all the bad passions and vindictive feelings of the human heart are exhibited,—what a spectacle! Who that has any regard for religion, any respect for the Christian character, does not feel pained and mortified by such a spectacle? Who that loves the Church and the honor of Christ does not mourn over it? And should not every Christian avoid placing himself in such a situation? Should he not feel that he ought rather to cut off his right hand than furnish such a spectacle before the world? And is it not the duty of all Christians, who feel for the honor of Christ and the credit of the Church, to discountenance an evil which has done so much injury and destroyed so many victims among the

professed disciples of Christ? The following incident, which appeared not long since in the secular papers, affords a striking illustration of our subject: "A complaint was made before a magistrate, by a prominent church member, of an assault by one of the brethren of the same church, and a warrant was issued. The parties were brought up for trial, but instead of proceeding with the case, the magistrate addressed them as follows: 'Gentlemen, you are members of the same church, professors of a faith that teaches peace and good will to all men. You, as professors of religion, are looked upon as guides to youth, in fact to all, no matter what may be your persuasion. By your example and course of conduct, as well as the doctrines which your faith inculcates, the public takes its moral tone. Now, how does it look to see two men, bound before their God to live in peace, and belonging to an institution in which all should love each other as brethren, standing in court, the *one* an accuser, the *other* a culprit? How will it sound abroad? What will be thought of you out of doors?'" These remarks had the desired effect. The parties shook hands, paid the costs, and went home together. In the course of the day the magistrate received a large and elegant Bible, at the hands of the plaintiff and defendant, which teaches that we should forgive men their trespasses, as we hope our heavenly Father to forgive us our trespasses. This example should teach a lesson to such professing Christians as forget themselves and their religion, when they go to law with their brethren before the civil magistrate.

Let then every Christian, and especially every minister of the gospel, who regards the peace and prosperity of the church and the salvation of his flock, bear his decided testimony against the unchristian practice of professing Christians going to law with each other. Let him warn his people against it, and show them the great evil of this sin, that they may avoid and discountenance it. Let all who love religion, and wish to see it prosper, unite in putting out of the way this rock of offense, which weighs so heavily on the Church, cripples her energies, and prevents her from assuming that high position before the world which she ought to hold.

2. *It is an evil which can in no sense be justified.* When men are guilty of this fault, they are exceedingly prone to justify themselves. They set up many excuses. They sometimes say that the law of the land gives them this right, and therefore it cannot be wrong for them to exercise it. It is true, a Christian has a *legal* right to go to law with his brother. So also a man has a *legal* right to manufacture poison and sell it to his neighbor, and take away his property by ministering to his vicious appetite, and sending him and his family to the poor-house; but would it be *right?* Is it right to make drunkards, and destroy

their bodies and souls, because the *law* gives us the right? When people speak of *their* rights, they should not forget the rights of *others*. If you have a right to go to law with your brother, Christ has *his* right also, and that is, the right of commanding you to love your brother and not injure him, and forgive him when he has trespassed against you; and if you disregard this right of Christ, he will hold you responsible. The Church has her right; and that is, that you should remain faithful to the covenant into which you have entered with her, and not turn against her and sting her like a viper after she has taken you to her bosom. Your brethren have their rights. They stand connected with you by sacred ties. They are deeply concerned in your conduct. You cannot exercise the right which the law gives you to grieve and distress them, without violating their rights, the rights of religion, the rights of God; and God will not permit you to violate these rights with impunity. To exercise such a right is to sin, and like every other sin which God has condemned, it cannot be justified in any case, or under any circumstances.

3. *It is an offense which the Church is bound to make a subject of discipline.* We have shown that it is a violation of principles of religion, which must be regarded as essential in every church. It is a violation of the principle of love, which is indispensable as a bond of union among Christians. It severs this bond, it breaks up the fellowship of the church, and destroys that unity of the Spirit by which the members of Christ's body are to be strengthened, and edified, and comforted, and prepared for the communion of the saints in heaven. And it is the duty of the church to guard against these evils, by exercising the authority with which God has invested her for these purposes. This authority, it is true, should be exercised with prudence and great forbearance; but yet cases do occur in which it must be exercised with promptness and decision, to save the credit of the Church and the honor and interests of religion. "Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them. We command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." This is the law of God for the discipline of the church; and in every church that would exercise proper discipline, this law must be enforced. When brother goeth to law with brother, and thus causes division and brings disunion and strife into the church, he must be regarded as walking disorderly, and be held subject to discipline; and if he refuses to yield to the counsel and admonitions of his brethren, the church is bound to withdraw herself from that disorderly member, lest she make herself a partaker of his sin, and share in the dishonor he has brought on religion.

This is a solemn duty which the church owes to herself and the interests of religion. No church can expect to prosper while she retains in her bosom disorderly and refractory members, who are exercising an influence to injure her character, and destroy her usefulness. God will not smile on a people who suffer religion to be thus openly dishonored. He will not bless them as long as they are conniving at wickedness, or tolerating it, or giving it their sanction in any sense. Christians must never think of entering into a compromise with those who set themselves up against the laws and institutions of religion. They must separate themselves from all iniquity, and come up to the high and holy standard which the church must assume if she would act worthy of herself and maintain the honor of her profession.

Let the church do her duty, that this evil, which has been so long a reproach to the Christian profession, may be wiped away; that it may no longer be said of the professed followers of Christ, "Brother goeth to law with brother;" that all strife, and malice, and evil speaking among professing Christians may cease, and the Church, which has been so long dishonored and cast down by these blots upon her character, may arise and come forth like the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.

SERMON DLIII.

BY REV. EDWIN F. HATFIELD, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE SEVENTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK.

THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL.

"For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"—2 Cor. 2: 15, 16.

It is related of an old Puritan divine, to whom it pleased God to grant abundant success in his holy vocation, that on the day of his ordination he made this record of the transaction: "I did this day receive as much honor and work as ever I shall be able to know what to do with." Greater honor no man need, no man can, desire than is connected with the faithful discharge of the work of the ministry. Nor can a human being engage in any work more fitted to task the energies of his whole man, and fill up his whole probation. It affords as much honor and work as ever he shall be "able to know what to do with."

Of the truth of these statements, the Apostle to the Gentiles appears to have had a most vivid and abiding sense. It was honor enough to him, whatever men might think of it, or whatever trials might come upon him in consequence, to be put in trust with the gospel as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. A greater honor he neither sought nor desired. He knew no greater. He conceived of none so great. *The work*, too, he loved no less than the honor. It was all his desire to fulfil it to the glory of his Lord. He engaged in it *because* he loved it. And the more he labored, the more he loved to labor, and the more God honored him. His work was one continued scene of glorious triumphs—not of human prowess, but of grace divine; not of the servant, but of his Master. Wherever he went,—and he went no where but to make known the glorious gospel of the Son of God,—his Lord went with him, smiled upon his exertions, and crowned them with his blessings, so that he could mark his journeyings by the lights which he had kindled in his progress, burning on, and burning ever, from living altars, and sending forth a sweet perfume, not less fragrant than the clouds of incense that ascended from the great altar of the sanctuary on Mount Zion. It was this that gladdened him in his toils,—this evidence of the Divine approbation of his work, so many testimonials of which had been given him,—and that prompted his

bursting heart to pour forth its gratitude in this glowing language, verse 14: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place."

If Paul had not himself witnessed, he was yet not unacquainted with the pomp and the splendor of the triumphal processions accorded to the returning conqueror, on his entrance into the imperial city. It was customary on such occasions to scatter in the path of the victorious general the most fragrant flowers, covering the street as with a bed of roses. The fires of numerous altars that lined the way were fed with frankincense and sweet-smelling herbs, that sent forth clouds of the most grateful odor. Following in the train of the conqueror was a numerous band, bearing sweet perfumes, the savor of which was diffused through all the surrounding air. Such was the triumph from which the apostle borrows the beautiful imagery of the text—verses 14–16. His language is peculiar. The word expressive of triumph is the very same that Plutarch and others use in reference to the military triumph of victorious generals.

Among the Gentiles, the smoking incense of the altar was thought to be peculiarly agreeable to the gods whom they worshipped, and the sacrifice was called *ευωσια*, a good savor. These views appear to have been derived from the usages and opinions of the Hebrews. As early as the days of Noah, it is said of an offering made unto God by the grateful patriarch, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor." The burnt sacrifice under the law is often spoken of as "a sweet savor unto the Lord." Lev. i: 3. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savor unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season: . . a continual burnt-offering, which was ordained in Mount Sinai for a sweet savor, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord." Num. 28: 1, 2, 6. In conformity with this usage, the apostle speaks, (Eph. 5: 2) of Christ as having "given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-swelling savor." So also (Phil. 2: 18), he speaks of the token of remembrance sent him from the Philippians, as "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing to God." In the same manner, here in the text, he speaks of himself and of the brethren who labored with him in the ministry, as Christ's *ευωσια* to God, an offering made by Christ, sending forth a sweet savor, acceptable, well-pleasing to God; or, to drop the figure, he spoke of the ministry as instituted by Christ, with the Father's approbation, to spread the knowledge of the gospel through the world.

The theme suggested by the text, and to which I propose now to call your attention, is—

THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL—ITS WARRANT—WORK—RESULTS—AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

1. *Its Warrant.* Whence is it? From heaven, or of man? Divine or human? Does the ministry derive its authority from the election and appointment of man, or from the calling and ordination of God? It is of great importance, both to the ministry and to those to whom they minister, rightly to determine this point. If we come to you in our own name alone, or in the name of the church alone, you may hear us or not, receive us or not, at your pleasure. But if we come to you in the name of the great Head of the Church; if we are appointed of God to the ministry of the gospel; if it is God who sends us to you with His message, then the case is vastly altered; then it is no light thing to make light of God's institution.

If, now, we refer to the epistles of Paul, we find a direct answer to these questions. As far as concerned his own ministry, he claimed for it the most ample Divine warrant. It was not a work into which he had thrust himself uncalled, of his own accord. It was not a work devised by man, to which he had devoted himself in obedience to the will of man, and in which he labored at the pleasure or bidding of any man or body of men whatever. Hear him, speaking to the Galatians (1: 1), and calling himself "an apostle, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." He claims of the Philippians (1: 1), and of the Colossians (1: 2,) to be regarded as "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." He introduces himself to Timothy (2 Tim. 1: 1) in the same manner, on one occasion; and on another (1 Tim. 1: 1) as "an apostle of Jesus Christ, by commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ our hope." In 1 Tim. 1: 12, he affirms that it was Christ who put him into the ministry: "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." In Gal. 1: 15, he claims to have been set apart to this work by the God who gave him birth: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

And what he claimed for himself, he also claimed for his brethren. He refers the work of the ministry to the will or pleasure of God. 1 Cor. 1: 21: "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." So (1 Cor. 5: 18) he affirms the divine origin of this institution: "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of re-

conciliation." On this ground he claims for the ministry the distinguished rank of Christ's embassadors and coadjutors: "Now then (verse 20) we are embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us." "We then (6: 1), as workers together [as his coadjutors], beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." "We, in all things, approving ourselves as the ministers of God."

But this claim he still more clearly and fully sets forth in Eph. 4: 7–16, where he teaches that when the Lord Jesus Christ had accomplished the work which brought him down from heaven, and had ascended up where he was before, he was pleased to bestow on his followers the gifts and graces of the ministry; constituting "some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." He affirms in this passage, of the ministry, that it is an arrangement devised, appointed, and directed by the Lord of heaven and earth, as the medium through which to communicate to the world the grace of salvation, and to fit the believer for a holy heaven.

The necessity of such an institution is exhibited by the apostle in Rom. 10: 14–16: "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." And still more strikingly by our Saviour himself, Matt. 9: 36–38: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd [no pastor]. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Great honor is here put upon the pastoral office by the Lord Jesus, who encourages his disciples to seek from God himself, whose province it is to raise them up and fit them for their work, a large increase of such laborers. It was immediately upon this that the Saviour separated the twelve, and sent them forth, and not long afterwards, seventy others, with the glad tidings of the kingdom. Having fulfilled his course, he gave commission to the twelve to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And this he did by virtue of his supreme authority as Lord of heaven and earth. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, &c. And, lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Thus sent forth, the disciples sought every where to raise up a flock of humble followers of Christ, and from among themselves to appoint over them such pastors as the people chose, by divine direction, to watch over them in the Lord. To the labors of these humble ministers, thus selected by and from among their brethren, and recognized by the apostles, or neighboring ministers and churches, either with or without the laying on of hands, God was pleased to set his seal, owning their ministry, giving them his Spirit, rewarding them with souls for their hire, and thus advancing his kingdom in the hearts of men. Such a seal he has ever put upon the labors of those whom he has counted faithful and enabled, putting them into the ministry.

I need not add that such also was the Divine pleasure, under the old dispensation. A distinct order or tribe of men was, by the direction of Him who spake in Horeb, set apart to the service of God in the Levitical ministry. It was by the ministrations and through the medium of men like themselves, that God was then pleased to convey to his people the blessings of his grace. The same principle of Divine procedure runs also through the new dispensation. They whom God calls are not, indeed, made known by their genealogy or descent from any one individual by ordinary generation, or by any ecclesiastical genealogy or descent from the twelve, of which notion we find no mention in Scripture. It is not at all by the will of man, not at all by human designation, that they are called and appointed. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," It is the reconciling and regenerating Spirit that first calls them into the kingdom of Christ, and then separates them to the work of the ministry. Without this call—of the reality of which an existent ministry and the Church may judge, but which they cannot give—no forms or rights whatever, however consecrated by usage remote and antique, can make a man a minister. With it, and with the seal of God that accompanies it, no human power can unmake a minister of God.

Such, then, is the ministry as respects its warrant. "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." The office is divine, and he whom the great Head of the Church has put into it, is sent of God.

> "The legate of the skies—his theme divine,
> His office sacred, his credentials clear."

To him are to be applied the words of the Redeemer—the tremendous sanction of the Son of God: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me: and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."

I pass to consider,—

II. *The Work of the Ministry.* Why has the great Head of the Church instituted the ministry? What is the particular work which they are to perform? What peculiar service are they to render? In reply to these questions, I scarcely need say, that theirs is not a secular employment. They are not sent to serve tables. The ministry of the Word is something entirely distinct from this. If tables are to be served—if secular work is to be done—let seven men, or more, or less, be chosen, who may be appointed over this business. The minister of Christ is neither to be a trustee nor a deacon. Much less is he to be made responsible for any of the pecuniary derangements or deficiencies of the ecclesiastical treasury. "It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables." This is no part of the burden laid upon him. The less he has to do with such matters the better for him. It ruined a Judas, and has been the ruin of thousands in and out of the Papacy—thousands who might have both saved themselves and those who heard them, had they given themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word."

Nor is the minister of the gospel called and sent merely to administer the ordinances of Christ's Church. These ordinances are not without their use, and are by no means without signification. But their place is subordinate. They are but means to an end. They are not the end itself. That is quite a different thing. The administration of the Lord's Supper is of great use to the Church, and it is important in its place—highly so. But this is not the work which the ministry are called to perform. It is a part, and but a small part of the work. It is important that baptism be administered to believers and their households, and it is a work very properly to be performed by the ministry; but it is not *the* work for which Christ Jesus has enabled them and put them into the ministry. "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Had Paul believed that baptism was a sealing ordinance, a saving act, identical with regeneration, he would, of course, have used very different language in relation to its administration. If he could so easily have regenerated men, he would have baptized all he could, and have given himself to this particular work. But no; he had other and greater work to do, and therefore seldom troubled himself about such matters, leaving it indeed not undone, but to be performed by the spiritual teacher of each particular church, as a matter of form to be duly observed in the admission of members.

The impression seems to be gaining ground in some quarters, that the due and orderly performance of these ordinances and certain antiquated rites and ceremonies is the work of the ministry. Would to God that the impression were made on the minds of Papists and Crypto-papists alone! Are there not others who

seem to think that the ministry are but appendages to—very convenient, indeed, and very useful in their place--a sort of necessary furniture for an elegant church, to go through a regular form on the Sabbath-day, of praying, or reading divine service, of preaching or performing the ceremonies of the church, for the gratification of a purse-proud aristocracy, a pleasure-loving people, and a fashion-following assembly? Is this the work which Christ has given us to do? Is it to preside at a ceremony; to give a sanction by our sanctimony to the gayety, and pomp, and display of a Sabbath assembly? Is it, in any sense, to minister to the entertainment of our fellow sinners in the sanctuary, whether by splendid praying, or eloquent preaching; by an admirable reading of the service, or by elegance of administration? Or are there those who make themselves content with such a work? Alas! that one such can be found.

> "He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames
> His noble office, and, instead of truth,
> Displaying his own greatness, starves his flock."

The work of the ministry is something vastly different from all this. It is coincident with the work which Christ himself came into this world to do. Not indeed to make an atonement for sin, not indeed to regenerate the souls of their fellow-men, neither of which is in their power. But it is to carry forward that great design for the execution and completion of which he promised and gave his Spirit; for the fulfilment of which he sent forth, and continues still to send forth, his chosen messengers with the Word of Life. We are sent, my brethren, to be apostles, not of Temperance, nor of Emancipation, but of Christ; to seek and to save that which was lost. We are sent to arouse the sinner from his slumbers, to sound an alarm in the ear of the careless, to trouble them that are at ease in their sins, to convince, to persuade, to entreat, to exhort, to beseech the sinner to be reconciled to God. We are sent to win souls; to rescue, if possible, the perishing and the dying; to pluck them as brands from the burning; to set before them the cross of Christ as the only hope, and to give them no rest until they are brought cheerfully to receive this only Redeemer as their prophet, priest, and king. We are sent not only to bring you out of darkness, but to introduce you into the marvellous light of the gospel; to lead you to the green pastures and the quiet streams of grace. We are to strive not only for the salvation of the sinner, but for the sanctification of the saints; "for the perfecting of the saints; for the edifying of the body of Christ," "whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

In short, the great work of the ministry is to preach the gos-

pel of Christ that the souls of their fellow-sinners, as many of them, and as speedily as possible, may be truly converted and brought into the liberty of the children of God. So did the early ministers of the gospel believe and act. They saw the world lying in wickedness, under the wrath and curse of God, and hasting to the judgment; and they earnestly sought to save them. For this they labored. For this they endured reproach. For this they frowned upon the flattery of the world. For this they denied themselves, took up the cross, and suffered without the camp. For this they counted not their lives dear to them; gladly laid them down. This was their great burden. This it was that made them such weeping prophets; that made a Paul protest that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart, that he could wish that himself were accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen, according to the flesh. This it was that made them so often cry with the son of Hilkiah, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

Such, brethren, is our work—the work which is given us to do. This is the work that is to engross our thoughts, to task our energies, to lay our whole man under contribution. Unless we are doing this work we are doing nothing. We may be ever so popular, preach ever so eloquently, please and gratify the people of our charge ever so much, but it is all laborious trifling if we are not doing the work which is given us to do. "Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching," says Baxter, "is but more glorious hypocritical sinning, if the end be not right." We must not be content—how can we be?—unless by God's help we are winning souls to Christ. We must cry unceasingly in the ears of these perishing thousands, "Turn ye; for why will ye die?" "I would think it a greater happiness," said Matthew Henry, "to gain one soul to Christ, than mountains of silver and gold to myself. If I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all my other gains with very little satisfaction; and I would rather beg my bread from door to door than undertake this great work."

In like manner we hear the missionary Brainerd exclaiming: "I care not where or how I live, or what hardships I go through, so that I may but gain souls to Christ. While I sleep I dream of these things; and when I wake, the first thing I think of is this great work." God forbid that any of us who are called to labor in this vocation should be content with any thing else than souls—very many souls—for our hire; that we should content ourselves in any thing short of the salvation and sanctification of those that hear us.

Let us now for a few moments look at—

III. *The Results of the Ministry.* The gospel of Christ can never be faithfully preached *in vain.* "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," it is true, not such as the world are wont to use in their sanguinary conflicts, and therefore the world may despise them. But feeble as they seem, they are "mighty, through God to the pulling down of strong holds." "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

God's Word is never preached in vain. The faithful minister of Christ never labors in vain. The preaching of such a minister ever savors of Christ. His very person spreads the savor wherever he goes.

> "'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings:
> Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
> That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.
> So when a ship, well freighted in the stores
> The sun matures on India's spicy shores,
> Has dropped her anchor, and her canvas furled
> In some safe haven of our western world,
> 'T were vain inquiring to what port she went;
> The gale informs us, laden with the scent."

So has it ever been. By the foolishness of preaching it has pleased God to save them that believe. Unnumbered millions have thus been saved. Christ's ministers have reaped a rich reward. They have preached "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; not as pleasing man, but God." The word thus preached has triumphed over all opposition, and proved itself, in instances numberless, to be "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." It is adapted to the sinner's state. It is fitted to awaken, to arouse, to convince, to alarm, to instruct, to enlighten, to sanctify, to save. Its efficacy is life-giving. It is a *savor of life.* Its voice is that of hope and salvation. It points to heaven, it leads the soul to God. It is a savor of life *unto life.* Myriads on myriads in the full fruition of paradise can testify to its life-imparting virtue, and not a few who still linger on the shores of time, not a few who worship with us in the sanctuary. And as it is with the word itself, so is it with them that preach it. They are a savor of life. Their work, their ministry, their

preaching, their labors are unto life. They have been angels of mercy to untold millions. A great company, whom no man can number, will bless God for ever that they were permitted to enjoy the labors of a godly ministry. The ministry to them was as life from the dead. What a dark world it would have been, but for their light! What a wretched world, but for their hope of which they have spoken! What an abandoned world, but for the ministrations of piety and love! What would you have been, dear hearers, but for the ministry? To what, under God, do you owe your own selves, your comforts, your consolations, your hopes of heaven, your blessed foretastes of the joys above, but to the ministry so despised of men, so honored of God?

"*In them that are saved, and in them that perish.*" It is too true —we cannot but admit it—there are those that perish even in an atmosphere so salubrious, so adapted to life. That which was ordained unto life becomes to some an occasion of death. To some who hear us, "we are the savor of death unto death." "We bear, indeed," says one of the early fathers, "the sweet odor of Christ's gospel to all; but all who participate in it do not experience its salutiferous effects. Thus to diseased eyes even the light of heaven is noxious; yet the sun does not bring the injury. And to those in a fever honey is bitter; yet it is sweet, nevertheless. Vultures, too, it is said, fly from sweet odors of myrrh; yet myrrh is myrrh, though the vultures avoid it. Thus if some be saved, though others perish, the gospel retains its own virtue, and we, the preachers of it, remain just as we are. The gospel retains its odorous and salutiferous properties, though some may disbelieve, abuse it, and perish."

The language of the apostle in reference to these results of the ministry is taken, apparently, from the writings of the Rabbins. We often meet with similar expressions in the writings of the ancient Jewish doctors. Thus they say of the words of the law, "They are a savor of life to Israel, but a savor of death to the people of the world." Again, "Whoever pays attention to the law on account of the law itself, to him it becomes an aroma (a savor) of life; but to him who pays no attention to the law on account of the law itself, to him it becomes an aroma of death."

It is thus with medicine; to the one it proves a savor of life, and to the other of death. The minister of the gospel "is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;" while to those who receive his message and his Master he proves an unspeakable blessing, to those who reject both he becomes an occasion of increased condemnation. Solemn and awful is the relation of a pastor to his people. It affects the spiritual condition of every member of the flock. For weal or for woe, will every one of them remember him through all eternity. To all eternity you

will rejoice that ever you listened to our entreaties, that you ever heard our voice; or to all eternity you will curse the hour that brought you under our ministrations. You must be either the better or the worse for our ministry. If you give heed, it will save you; if you forbear, it will ruin you. Every sermon that we preach is big with the fate, the fortune of souls. If it is true that God hath sent us, you cannot be an unconcerned, an unaffected hearer of our message. Deeply does it concern every one of you so to hear that you may be saved. Terrible will your condemnation be, if you heed us not. Aggravated beyond expression will be your guilt, if you "neglect the great salvation" thus presented, thus pressed upon your acceptance. "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city."

IV. *The responsibilities of the Ministry.* Well might an apostle, though inspired, though not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles, though commissioned and sent by the immediate revelation of Jesus Christ,—well might even a *Paul* exclaim, "*And who is sufficient for these things?*"

We whom God has counted faithful, and enabled us, putting us into the ministry, are but *earthen vessels*—but flesh and blood—are men of like passions with you, subject to all the infirmities of a corrupt nature, exposed to temptations innumerable from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

"Bowed down beneath a load of sin,
By Satan sorely pressed,
By wars without and fears within,
By numerous cares distressed."

Weak, short-sighted, prone to err, liable to mistakes in judgment and errors in practice, needing and seldom receiving the same instruction, encouragament, consolation, reproof, admonition, entreaty and counsel as the humblest of our flocks. Such, dear brethren, are we.

And yet what a burden are we called to bear; what a load of anxiety; what an amount of responsibility! "I have set thee," saith the great Jehovah, "a watchman unto the house of Israel. If you shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me, when I say unto the wicked, O wicked man! thou shalt surely die! if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, the wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." These are the words that ring in our ears when we come before you in the sanctuary; that follow us to our homes, to our studies, to our retirements. Which of you all would wish to bear such a burden?

How overwhelming to the conscientious minister is the re-

flection that forces itself upon him, as he looks about on his congregation: "On the words that I am about to speak, and the manner in which I speak them, are depending the eternal destinies of many of these perishing souls!" And oh! how much wisdom does it need to direct the inquiring soul! One wrong word may prove the ruin of a soul. What wisdom do we need in order to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain; to seek the wandering and set them right; to instruct the wayward, to persuade the obstinate, to rebuke the transgressor, to comfort the disconsolate, to strengthen the feeble, and to present every man at last perfect before God!

But I forbear. I have said enough to show that the minister of Christ cannot be too thoroughly furnished with the stores of learning, both human and divine; that he of all men should be a novice neither in Christian experience nor in theological discipline; that he needs a sound mind in a sound body; that he cannot be too watchful, too meak, too diligent, too laborious, if he task himself to the utmost of his strength. I have said enough to convince the most inconsiderate that the ministry have large claims upon the people of God, for support in their work, for a comfortable subsistence, for a ready and cheerful co-operation, and for a constant remembrance in their prayers. Let your prayers go forth from hearts sincere and sympathizing for him who is called to watch over you in the Lord. What can he accomplish else? "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. For we are laborers together with God." Of what avail will all our preaching, all our labors be, without the Spirit? What a blessing, rich and eternal, to you and yours, will the ministry be, if the Spirit be given! To how many of you will it then prove a savor of life unto life, to whom, without the Spirit it must prove a savor of death unto death! Pray, then, we beseech you, brethren, in all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, that we, who are called to this work, and who are not "sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves," may receive all needful sufficiency of God; may be enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge; may be made wise to win souls, and may save both ourselves and them that hear us; that when we are called to give an account for your souls, we "may do it with joy and not with grief."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 9, Vol. XXV.] SEPTEMBER, 1851. [Whole No. 297.

SERMON DLIV.

BY REV. MARK TUCKER, D.D.,

WETHERSFIELD, CONN.

LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."—Rom. xii. 18

This chapter may with propriety be termed the Christian's manual. It contains, in few words, a beautiful system of Christian morals. No production of man on the subject of morals could be perfect, that did not contain the great principles embodied in this chapter.

Some have called the precepts found in the text and context the romance of Christianity; as though it were extravagant to suppose that in this selfish world, agitated continually with the conflicts of life, exposed to strifes and contentions, any could live in peace. But this blessed gospel is not romance. We are told the light of heaven shines, and the darkness of earth comprehendeth it not. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* One born blind cannot conceive of the beauties of the rainbow; so one under the dominion of supreme selfishness cannot well comprehend the exercise and blessedness of benevolence.

The didactic parts of the Bible are given in plain, intelligible language. They are adapted to all grades of character, all conditions of life. They are sublime and beautiful for their simplicity, solemn and weighty for their authority. *They are given to be obeyed.*

We shall, first, endeavor to *give the true import of this passage.* Secondly, attempt to *show how this precept can be obeyed.* Thirdly, *urge some motives to induce obedience.*

I. We shall endeavor to *give the true import of this passage.*

This precept is not a solitary one; it is found in substance both in the Old and the New Testaments In the 34th Psalm: *Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it.* Heb. xii. 14: *Follow peace with all men.*

The language of the text is guarded: *If it be possible.* Here is no ground for the charge of extravagance. We are not responsible for the wickedness or cruelty of others. There may be instances in which the good of society, the cause of morals, the safety of the public, may require that an example be made of the incorrigible, the obstinately wicked.

Some men, as the Scriptures affirm, are like a troubled sea, which cannot rest. They seem to have an evil spirit, like the men of Shechem, (Judges ix. 23;) a spirit of treachery and selfishness, which will disturb any community; Ishmaelites — their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them. Peace may be disturbed, but *we* must not cause the disturbance, or do any thing to prolong it.

As much as lieth in you. We may have an unhappy temperament, an irascible temper, a restless disposition. This we must subdue. It is said that Socrates was naturally ill-tempered, easily provoked, and revengeful; but by mere dint of resolution and discipline he mastered his evil propensity, and became habitually calm, peaceable, and gentle. If a heathen could subdue himself, what excuse can we have for remaining under the dominion of passion, who are surrounded by the influence of the gospel, who live under laws pervaded by the spirit of forbearance and equity, and are furnished with such examples of mildness and long-suffering as are found in the Bible?

As much as lieth in you. We are to do all in our power to exhibit a good spirit to others, to do them good, to forbear with them to return blessing for railing; never to give them any provocation, to keep within the bounds of propriety and justice.

It must be a rare instance of brutality and malice to injure one who is habitually kind and forgiving, to abuse good-nature. Yet there are such persons. They will torture the sensitive and impose upon the retiring and helpless. But even in that case, it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. The object is peace; great sacrifices are to be made to attain it. The precept is exceeding broad. We are to go to the extent of *possibility;* not of expediency, not of policy, not of comfort, but of possibility—*if it be possible.* We are to make every effort; each one is held responsible for his own exertions; they are to be put forth to the utmost extent.

As much as lieth in you. If you have tried seventy times, you are not to give up the matter in despair, but as in the case of forgiveness, until seventy times seven—to the extent of our power.

We are to live peaceably with *all men.* Of some it is said,

if all the world were like them, there would be no contention; they are peaceably disposed, always doing good. Of others, that they are always in trouble; restless, domineering, exacting, cruel, envious, jealous, revengeful, hateful, and hating one another. Even with such we must live peaceably—receive, but never return an injury.

We can neither approve nor love what is unlovely. An evil disposition is hateful; but if called to give an expression in relation to it, we must call things by their right names. We can only approve of things that are excellent. If no good is to be done, we are to avoid all needless exposure of the faults of others. There must be no man who can say in truth, If *you* had done all in your power, we should never have been at variance.

It does not say, live peaceably with all *reasonable* men, all *fair* men, all *kind* men; but if there are unreasonable men, unkind and uncomfortable men, we are, if possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with them. It requires no effort to live in peace with one who is benevolent and well-disposed.

The qualifying words in the text suppose there will be trials, provocations, and occasions of strife. If you do well when you have no temptation to do otherwise, what reward can you claim? but if, when you are injured or insulted, or cruelly treated, you take it patiently, this is praiseworthy, this is what the text requires. The men of the world act on the principle of retaliation—an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but the gospel proposes another rule: *Resist not evil; do good to them who injure you, and pray for them who despitefully use you.* So far our duty is plain.

Some may be ready to inquire, How shall we conduct ourselves towards those who are opposed to the truth, who hate the light? Shall we conceal the offensive parts of the Bible? Shall we be silent when the doctrines or duties of religion are assailed? We answer, No. We have special directions in this matter. We have also the example of Christ and his apostles. Jude says: *It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* Says Christ: *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

There are many such passages of Scripture as these. They teach us that natural men will pervert the gospel and oppose it; that it is the duty of Christians, of ministers especially, to refute error and bear witness to the truth. Controversy cannot always be avoided, but we must be careful not to lose our temper, not to indulge ill-will, not to treat those who differ from us as enemies. The deeper the error, the more tender should be our compassion; for in proportion to their exposure to perish in their sins, should be our desire to save the souls of men. *Am I your enemy,* inquires an apostle, *because I tell you the truth?*

Those who are guilty of immorality, or are chargeable with heresy, must be admonished; an effort must be made to reclaim

them, lest they die in their sins, or fatally injure others. No duty is required of us which cannot be performed if attempted in a proper spirit. If we are to contend for the faith, it should be with right *motives*—it must not be for *victory*; and in a *right way*, not with carnal weapons. If we exhort or reprove, it must be with all long-suffering and doctrine. If the text were understood and obeyed, it would put an end to all war, to duels and personal animosity, to litigation and strife.

One or the other of contending parties must be in fault; it is usually true of both. If peace is sought, it may be obtained. If rulers violate the laws of God and declare war, the oppressed nation has a right to resist, and private individuals may be called into the field, in which case they are not responsible for the consequences.

It will be a great advance in the progress of civil society, when nations bind themselves to settle all difficulties by arbitration. If men will take time to consider, reason will gain the ascendency. We are assured the period will come, when *men shall learn war no more.*

II. *How can this precept be obeyed?*

We answer, in general, by watching against besetting sins. *Watch and pray*, said Christ, *that ye enter not into temptation.* Every one has his easily besetting sins; and not among the least of them is a hasty temper, an overbearing disposition, a revengeful spirit. If a man is aware of his infirmity and will guard against it, he may hope to escape the evil of transgression. More particularly.

1. *By cultivating a peaceable spirit.*

As man is a social being, he is constituted for society. He acts and is acted upon. He is constantly exerting an influence, and is also affected by the temper and conduct of others. If we cherish kindly feelings, are disposed to put a fair construction upon the actions of men; if we are discreet, temperate, humane, and ready to communicate, we shall do much towards maintaining peace in the community. It is said, "Love begets love;" the same is true of peace. It will be no difficult matter to live in peace, if we ourselves are peaceable. *A wrathful man stirreth up strife, but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*

To cherish a peaceable disposition, we must have a deep sense of our own unworthiness; we must not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We must mortify pride, overcome selfishness, and put a strong restraint upon every unholy feeling. Religion inculcates humility. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honor preferring one another.* It enjoins fervent charity, a disposition to do good to all men. *Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves.* Says Paul: *I beseech you walk worthy of your vocation, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* One who

habitually dwells upon his own imperfections, upon the forbearance of God, the mutual dependence of the members of the same household and community, will see the necessity of forbearance and kindness. God does not treat us as we deserve; shall we be overbearing to our fellow servants? So long as we cultivate a peaceable temper, we shall give no offence to any, we shall avoid all provocation.

2. *By aiming to promote a spirit of peace in others.*

There is too much of the disposition of Cain in the world: *Am I my brother's keeper?* By standing aloof from others, throwing all responsibility upon them, we induce a hardness and selfishness which prompt to keen-sightedness to every fault, which put men on the defensive, ready to misconstrue every word, and suspect every motion. If we fail to inspire confidence, there is no bond of union. Many who appear unamiable have diseased bodies; they need a physician rather than a reprover; they claim our sympathy. Others, who appear unkind, and become involved in difficulty, are thus punished for the sins of their youth. They were never subdued, never taught to take an interest in others; they are strangers to the happiness and sunshine of benevolence; selfishness has had supreme control till they come to act only for their own good. Their own peace, the comfort of others, the peace of the community, are sacrificed to present feelings. They cannot bear to be crossed. Such unhappy individuals are their own worst enemies. How are we to live in peace with such? Certainly not by exhibiting a similar spirit; that would at once kindle the fire of enmity; but by putting on the meekness of Christ. A meek, forbearing spirit has done wonders. How did Jacob pacify his enraged brother? Not by showing a bold front, and marshalling a host to intimidate him; but by showing kindness, by doing him good, by an appeal to his better feelings, by showing a heart susceptible of warm affection, by assuming the air and using the language of humility. He attempted no justification. If *Esau* could be won by kindness, of *whom* shall we despair?

How did Paul soften the prejudices of his countrymen who were so hostile to him? By the power of argument, or the force of ridicule and biting sarcasm? No; but by submitting to obsolete rites or abstaining from allowed indulgences. He manifested an inexhaustible spirit of tenderness. His own affecting statement will best illustrate his course on this subject: *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

It is necessary for us to oppose error, or testify against overt acts of sin, our *manner* must be mild: our sincerity must be so manifest, that we have a witness even in the conscience we distress, that all may feel that we are ready to heal the wound which faithfulness to Christ and truth compels us to inflict. Opposition to evil is consistent with love to those who commit it. Sin is odious, but the sinner is immortal, and a desire to save him should be the manifest feeling of our hearts.

We are not expected to accomplish impossibilities. *If it be possible*, says the apostle. There are some persons so bigoted in their religious views, that all must come to their standard or be denounced. How can we keep the unity of the Spirit with them? We must surrender our judgment and reason, and think as they do. They have no idea of condescension. The giving up must be all on one side. Many fruitless attempts have been made to promote universal Christian union; oceans have been traversed, conventions held, able arguments urged, eloquence and piety have exhausted their powers—in vain. Men are as wide apart as ever. Christians will not give up the right of private judgment; each denomination claims the privilege of interpreting for themselves the Scriptures, and choosing a platform for their union.

So it is in social life. Some are so dogmatical and important, that if an attempt is made to promote peace in sincerity, to bury all ill-will, to harmonize all in the church or in society, there is but one way: all must yield to one mind, submit to one dictation. This they are not willing to do. Confidence is a plant of slow growth; once lost, it is not easily regained. What, then is to be done? Shall we despair of living in peace, because some are contentious? No man was ever more hated, or defamed, or ill-treated, than Jesus of Nazareth; and yet he went about doing good, he maintained a peaceable walk, he inculcated peace and exemplified its spirit. Who were his enemies? and of what did they accuse him? Was he not holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners? He avoided those who were incensed by his presence. It will be safe to follow his example. After we have done all we can to dissolve the rigor of prejudice, to do away false impressions, to present the truth in a fair light; after we have shown a meek, quiet spirit, and have labored to save the souls of men, we may leave the matter with God. Such was the conduct of Christ and his apostles. They went to the extent of possibility to live peaceably with all men.

I am aware that many regard this precept as impracticable; and while it may be allowed in a system of morals, and is even admired as an abstraction, it is deemed absurd as a rule of life. Every one has a reason for his opinion. Some are benefited temporally by contention; some unfortunately have a quarrelsome disposition, and therefore say, "We must take men as they are, and not as they ought to be." The precept is so far above and beyond any thing they know or believe, they think him an enthu-

least who would insist upon a compliance with it. Such, most unquestionably, are mistaken, and the mistake is an important one. If they die in it, they will lie down in eternal sorrow. A contentious spirit, after death, will go to its own place. What was said of the Bible is true of this distinctive feature of it: the chief objection against it is a *bad heart*. The precept lies, with all its solemn weight, upon every conscience. To every one, God says, *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

III. *We urge some motives to induce obedience to this precept.*

Among many which might be adduced, we select the following, in the hope that a duty so important, involving so many interests, securing so many blessings, may be observed by all.

1. *Our own peace will be secured.* We cannot violate a law of our nature without suffering its penalty. We are so constituted, that contentions renders us unhappy. We are made for peace. The universal disposition, since the apostasy, to strife, shows how entirely sin has transformed man—what a revolution in our nature has been effected by the fall. If selfishness has been termed the essence of sin, it is without doubt the cause of sorrow. A condition of peace is one of comparative happiness. What so desirable in this world as friends? and he that would have friends must show himself friendly. There is no person, however obscure or weak, however dependent or poor, whose good-will is not worth possessing. Even Doeg, who was overlooked by David as unworthy of a thought, a personification of meanness and jealousy, did him no small injury. A regard to our own comfort and safety should lead us to live peaceably with all men.

2. *A regard for the welfare of others* should induce us to cultivate a spirit of peace.

We are required to *do good to all men* We cannot injure them more than to provoke them to anger. An injury disturbs the temper, and stirs up wrong feeling. The first promptings of unsanctified nature are to return the injury. This will only inflame the aggressor, and, in turn, an additional amount of enmity is felt; and thus deep-seated opposition is cherished, embittering future life, while the injury perhaps originated in inadvertence or thoughtlessness.

If we habitually cherish kind feelings, we shall never provoke others. Men put a favorable construction upon the conduct of those who have gained a character for benevolence. Words or actions which cause regret are usually provoked. How can we do others more injury than to throw them off their guard; to irritate them, either by insinuation or reproach? Even Moses, so distinguished for meekness, was led to speak unadvisedly, for which he suffered more than for all the other acts of his life. We do not know what a fire we may be kindling, which may consume our own peace, and that of many others, by breaking the bond of peace. Oh, let us avoid the very appearance of evil!

3. *A desire to be useful* should lead us to obey this precept. A

family, or neighbourhood, or church, disturbed, precludes all hope of doing good. In proportion to the elevation of the station we occupy is the obligation to serve our day and generation. Life is short, our friends and acquaintances are passing away; we cannot, therefore, afford to spend any part of our brief stay in this world in contention. This consideration influenced the Apostle Paul. He says to the Corinthians; *Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.* Having exhorted them to *give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God,* he adds, *Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

Days of contention will have an end; the evils of strife must be reviewed. How will it plant our dying pillow with thorns, to remember our ill-feelings, to think of the injury we have done to others, how much we have abridged their usefulness. It shed a light around the feet of Samuel, the prophet and judge of Israel, as he was about to enter the valley of death, to reflect how he had studied to promote the spiritual and temporal good of the people. He was a man of peace and justice; he had been a blessing in his day and generation. *Blessed are the peace-makers,* said Christ.

Usefulness is best promoted in the midst of tranquillity. *The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.* It is not sown amidst the noisy disputation and virulent invectives of angry and contending parties.

My brethren, if we would be more extensively useful, and, dying, would leave a reputation better than precious ointment, let us cultivate a peaceable spirit, and aim to promote a good understanding among all men.

4. *The intrinsic excellence and divine beauty of peace* should stimulate us to live peaceably with all men.

Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. This delightful psalm, in the spirit of it, will be sung in heaven. As the dew that fell upon the sacred mountain, reviving the face of nature, and diffusing the freshness of health through the vegetable kingdom, so is the spirit of peace in this world of conflict. It spreads a charm over the face of society, fills the hearts of all men with joy, and assimilates earth to heaven.

5. *The genius of Christianity* leads to an observance of this precept.

The grand characteristic of the gospel is *peace.* The great object of worship is the God of peace. The Mediator is the Prince of peace. The Sanctifier is the Spirit of peace. The

object of Christ's mission was to restore peace between God and man. Reconciliation is the burden of our embassy. "Peace on earth and good-will to man" was the substance of the song sung by angels when they announced the coming of Christ. The tendency of the gospel is to promote peace. What then more befitting the disciple of Jesus than a life of peace? A contentious spirit is a denial of the Lord that bought us; it is contrary to the whole system of grace revealed in the gospel. The true representation of a follower of Christ would be a person with a light in one hand to dispel the darkness of sin, and an olive-branch in the other, showing that his object is peace.

6. *The example of Christ and his apostles* is another reason why we should seek peace and pursue it.

We are commanded to walk worthy of our vocation; to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. This feature of Christ's character we are particularly required to imitate. *For even hereunto were ye called*, says Peter, *because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.* While he was *holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners*, he was at the same time meek and gentle; *when reviled, he reviled not again;* he prayed for his murderers; what could he have done more to promote peace on earth?

The apostles followed in his steps; and they urge us to imitate them in this respect. *Walk so as ye have us for an ensample.* How can we expect to be associated with them in the kingdom of heaven, if we have not their spirit.

FINALLY. Obedience to this precept is connected with a *hope of eternal blessedness.*

They who are contentious, and obey not the truth, are represented as in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity; while those who live peaceably with all men from a right motive, are included in the blessings of grace. *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.* Heaven is a place of perfect peace, because it is a place of perfect purity. To inherit the promises, we must become meet for the inheritance here; we must cultivate the spirit of Christ, and be at peace with all men.

How desirable the condition of a family, a neighbourhood, a church, a community, in perfect harmony,—each one happy in himself, and happy in all around him! Nothing but sin, in the form of selfishness, prevents such a state. We are told that there was war in heaven, but the evil spirit was at once and for ever banished. The millennium, which is described as resembling heaven, will be a period when knowledge will abound, and all the world will be at peace. Glorious period!

Brethren, what manner of spirit do we possess? Have we the meekness of Christ? Do we consider this precept as binding upon us? Do we strive to overcome our pride and self-will? Have any of us been so long under the influence of selfishness,

that we have lost the power of self-control, and are at the mercy of every provocation? We may think it a light matter to violate this law of Christ, but present and future punishment will teach us otherwise.

Peace is the best blessing of heaven; let us seek after it with all our hearts. *God hath called you to peace. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*

SERMON DLV.

BY REV. THOMAS M. CLARK, D.D.,

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, HARTFORD, CONN.

LEGAL AND GOSPEL SYSTEMS COMPARED.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of the flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.—ROMANS viii. 3, 4.

The text may be thus paraphrased: For what the moral law could not do, that is to free man from sin and condemnation,—because it was inefficacious, in consequence of the power of sin,—God did, by sending his Son, who took upon himself the likeness of sinful flesh, or the nature of man, and for sin, (literally, by a sacrifice for sin,) condemned sin in the flesh,—condemned it by his death, showed it to be abhorrent to God, condemned it, in that he subdued it, destroyed it. And this was done, that the righteousness required by the law might be made attainable by us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Three things are here declared: 1st. That the law cannot free us from the power or the guilt of sin; 2dly. That, to meet this exigency, God clothed his own Son with the form of humanity, and, through his sacrifice, the dominion of sin was destroyed; and 3dly. That in virtue of this sacrifice, believers, or those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, are restored to the favor of God.

Nominal Christians all agree that man is in a state of sin, and consequently at alienation from God.

They all agree, that so long as he remains in this condition of alienation, he is in the way to ruin.

They all agree, that he can be restored to God's favor and to the path of true happiness, only through some change of life and character.

But, from this point, their opinions widely diverge. There are those who assert that the sinner is reconciled to God, simply and solely in virtue of his repentance and consequent good works. The law indeed requires implicit and unbroken obedience, upon pain of the severest penalties; but, in view of man's reformation, God in his sovereignty sets aside the demands of the law. And the purpose for which Christ came into the world was to declare this great fact, that God is ready to restore to his favor all who will repent and turn from their sins; and also to disclose a great system of motive, fitted to lead us to this repentance.

On the other hand, it is the faith of the Church that, while repentance is an indispensable condition of salvation, so far as those are concerned who are capable of repentance, it is not the procuring cause, the *ground* of our salvation. We believe that Christ came into the world to do that for us, without which God would not have accepted our repentance; and that, had Christ not died, let man have done what he might, the law must inevitably have had its course, and every sinner have been utterly and eternally condemned. And, if we can understand the force of language, this must be the doctrine of the text.

But it is not my present purpose to enter upon the exposition or direct proof of the evangelical system of faith: my design is rather to consider it in its *practical* and *personal* bearing. Now it is a very common remark: Inasmuch as all recognise the existence of sin and acknowledge its great evil; as all allow the necessity of our being delivered from sin in order to secure the favor of God; as all believe that the truly penitent actually receive forgiveness at his hands; why does it greatly matter what may be our individual opinion as to the ground of our acceptance with God, and as to the precise place which the Saviour holds in the sinner's justification? The *practical* duties to which we are pointed under both systems are the same; they both teach that only the pure in heart can see God. Is it then vitally important that I should receive, in its full length and breadth, what is called the scheme of grace, the doctrine of salvation through the merits of a crucified Redeemer? Let us consider this question with candor and seriousness; for a more momentous inquiry was never started.

You will all allow, that, in order to bring any system of motives to bear effectually upon the renewal and sanctification of the sinner, it is, in the first place, indispensable to produce in his mind the *conviction of sin*. Till this is effected, nothing is effected. We may discourse till the day of doom of the beauty of holiness, of the goodness of God, of the reasonableness of his service, and it will be like pouring water upon the rock, unless we can convince men that they are sinners, and that sin is "that abominable thing which God hateth." And the great cause of the utter inefficacy of mere moral teaching, is to be found in the

fact that men do not appreciate the depth of their own corruption.

. Now, as it is one great object of the gospel to awaken us to a sense of our sinfulness, it may be fairly inferred that it will reveal a system of truth, peculiarly fitted to give us high notions of the majesty of the divine law, and of God's hatred of sin; such a system as will be likely to draw forth from the transgressor the earnest cry, "Woe is me, for I am unclean!"

Is such a result to be looked for from the doctrine which teaches that, without an atonement, without the mediation of an Almighty Saviour, God may be propitiated, and all the terrific threatenings of justice be set aside?

Is it not altogether natural for the sinner to reason thus with himself?—"An evil so easily remedied cannot be in itself a very grevious evil. If a few tears of contrition, and such an imperfect obedience as usually follows this penitential sorrow, are all that God requires in order to the blotting out the long record of my iniquities—all that he demands, in order to my restoration to his favor—all that he asks, in order to my admission to heaven—surely he cannot look upon me as so deeply criminal. There must be something in my natural infirmity and in my outward condition, which greatly palliates the enormity of my sins. If peace may be had with God on such easy terms, the stability of his government cannot depend upon the holiness of the universe. If the claims of the law may be so readily annulled, that law cannot deserve very profound respect, and I need not be seriously terrified by its penalties." Whether this reasoning be sound or not, it is precisely such as the sinner would be inclined to adopt. Men always judge of the importance and imperativeness of any command or requisition, by the *consequences* which follow its neglect. When they are taught to believe that the penalties of disobedience will not take effect, or may be averted upon easy terms, disastrous results will ensue. Where they detect weakness and indecision in the administration of the law, they will soon learn to despise the law. This is true in civil government, and it would prove so in the case of the Divine government.

We assert, then, that the system which declares that "without the shedding of blood" there may be "remission of sin," is not likely to lead man to feel the exceeding guilt and the imminent peril of his condition as a sinner. So far as his iniquity causes him present discomfort, interferes with his present well-being, or occasions confusion and mischief in society, he may apprehend and feel its evil. But as an offence against God, as exposing him to the terrors of a violated law, he perceives neither its malignity nor his personal danger. He cannot understand why one should cry out of the depths of a broken spirit, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" He does not feel that "there is no soundness in his

flesh," that he was "conceived in sin," and that "all the imaginations of his heart are only evil, and that continually!" To him, all this has the air of exaggeration; it awakens no corresponding consciousness in his heart: he acknowledges indeed that he is a sinner, that he has broken the law of God, that he has neither loved nor served his Maker, but all this gives him little anxiety. God is merciful and easily propitiated, and will be loth to cast off the creature he has made.

This, my hearers, is the precise operation of that system from which Christ is excluded. And so the sinner, having no just convictions of the evil of sin, of his own guilt and peril, hears the threatenings of the law and the pleadings of the gospel with the same indifference; and every effort to lead him to the Saviour, as a poor, helpless and ruined transgressor, comes to naught.

But what is gained, in this respect, by setting forth the doctrine of the text—that God, by the sacrifice of his Son, condemned sin in the flesh?

I. *God's opinion of sin* is illustrated in that sacrifice. That indeed might be inferred from his own holiness—from the temporal evils which he has made to follow in the train of sin; but if, without any such exhibition as was made on Calvary, he had opened his arms to the sinner, and received him back to his favor, it might have been doubted whether, after all, he regarded sin with that infinite abhorrence which he is said to feel towards all forms and degrees of iniquity. It might at least have been thought that the attribute of justice is subordinate to that of mercy. But the sacrifice of his Son has put all such questions for ever to rest. This was the costliest offering that could have been laid at the feet of justice. It was the highest possible exhibition of God's hatred of sin, and of the inflexibility of his law. It was the most striking demonstration of his ineffable holiness of which it is possible to conceive.

If then a man doubts his own guiltiness, or is disposed to look lightly upon the fact of his sin, I would take him to the cross, and show him the terrific consequences of sin, as exhibited there. Amid the cries, and curses, and jeerings of an infuriated rabble, hanging between two thieves, while rocks are rending and graves opening, and the noonday sun withdraws his light, I would point him to the Son of God, before whom angels had for ages rejoiced to cast their crowns, now bathed in blood, and in agonies unutterable, bearing the curse of a violated law. And while that mighty sacrifice proclaimed in his ears the astounding *love* of God, I would remind him how it also declares his opinion of the evil of sin—an evil so great, that, even in the exercise of his Almighty sovereignty, he will not venture to offer pardon to a single transgressor, till, with tears and groans, his only Son has made expiation for human guilt.

And, my friends, it is the fact, that no man ever comprehended the true nature of sin, ever appreciated his own personal guilt,

until he had been brought near to the cross and stood by the side of of Christ in his dying agonies. To that position he must come before he can really feel his actual exposure to the wrath of a holy God, his need of forgiveness, and the deep malignancy of his own depravity. There the conviction will fasten upon his soul. If God spared not his own Son, what have I to hope for? If the innocent is thus made to suffer, upon the mere assumption of another's guilt, what vengeance must be in store for me, stained and blackened as I am with the defilement of actual corruption!

II. In the second place, what is the practical operation of the two systems under consideration, as it respects the *nature of the change* which we need to experience, in order to our salvation?

Where there is no just and adequate view of the evil of sin, there can be no proper understanding of the character and extent of the change which man needs to experience. And so we find it is thought by those who reject the doctrines of grace, that there is no such "weakness of the flesh" as to prevent us from fulfilling the law, so far as is necessary in order to our final safety. They assume a low standard of obedience, and a high standard of human ability. They are thus led to dispense with the agency of the Holy Spirit in effecting the sinner's conversion, and trust to their own might in producing this great change They recognize the necessity of no radical transformation of their nature, of no renovation of the soul, and so they fail to take that initiatory step from which all true spiritual life must date its commencement. And this is like the endeavour to cause a perpetual stream to flow where there is no fountain, rain to descend where there are no clouds, foliage and fruit to grow where there is no root. They may become men of reputable morals, and unexceptionable outward demeanor, but they do not become the children of God and heirs of eternal life. They are not "born again," and therefore they "cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." This is conclusive against their system. They build upon their own good works, when, in fact, they do nothing which is really acceptable in the sight of God. Their faithfulness, in respect of their social and human relations, only serves to quiet their conscience in view of their neglect of weightier and more imperative obligations. There is no man so entirely unapproachable as one who meets the solemn call of the gospel by pointing to his charities and honorable character, as though the law were thus fulfilled. How one who knows any thing of his own heart can be content to build upon such a foundation, we find it hard to conceive; but it cannot be doubted that there are multitudes who feel that the threatenings of the Scripture are not meant for them, and a Saviour is not needed by them, simply because their fellow-men can bring no charge against their reputation.

But there is a system of truth which leads to far different conclusions. It begins with revealing to man his true charac-

ter and his real condition. It calls off his attention from his own outward virtues—which are perhaps only the instincts of humanity, or prudential deeds which bring their own reward with them—and directs his eye upon the heart, upon its volitions and affections, as compared with the demands of God's pure and holy law. It takes up his motives and desires, and subjects them all to a rigid analysis; proves them in the alembic of the gospel, and shows the man that they are but dross. It applies a test, before which all his fancied righteousness vanishes like smoke. It thus empties him of all his pride, all his confidence, all his self-reliance, and makes him feel that there is *no soundness* in him. It next shows him precisely what he needs, which is a "new heart and a new spirit;" the implanting of a renewed nature, the infusion of a new principle of being; so that his choice, his preference will be directly reversed. It does not tell him that by reforming his habits, by beginning to obey God, he may gradually return to true holiness; but that all this must be the *result* of a changed heart, a spiritual regeneration. The issues are corrupt, because the fountain is corrupt; and a clean thing cannot be brought forth from an unclean.

It then satisfies him that this inward change it is beyond his power to accomplish, and thoroughly convinces him of his own inabiliy. He is made to recognize his utter helplessness, while he still acknowledges the justice of his condemnation. He is chained, but it it his own fault, for he voluntarily placed his hands in the manacles of Satan.

But at this point the Holy Spirit leads him to Jesus, and in him he discerns One mighty to save. He throws himself at the feet of Christ, saying, "Lord, I am blind, open mine eyes; I am corrupt, make me clean; I am lost, give me redemption!" He hears the gracious answer: "I will—be thou clean!" and he is made whole from that very hour. The Saviour lifts him from the ground, seals him in the forehead with the sign of redemption, and he goes on his way rejoicing. Now he can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And having *thus* entered upon his Christian course, having "entered by the *door* into the sheep-fold," he advances from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, till death closes his probation; and then, seeing Christ as he is; he is transformed into his glorious image.

This is the operation of the two systems which have been presented to your notice, in respect of that change which reason and Scripture declare must be wrought in the sinner before he can be restored to the favor of God.

The one merely whitens the sepulchre; the other purifies it of its uncleanness. The one only modifies the character, and checks its grosser developments; the other transforms it.

Is it of little importance which is received and adopted?

III. In the third and last place, how do the two systems bear upon the *promotion of practical godliness*?

The answer to this question has been already in great part anticipated. If there exist a radical mistake as to what constitutes true godliness, or as to the principle from which that godliness must spring, its baleful effect must be seen in the whole style and manner of life. But we would present this point in still another light.

What are the *motives* by which the man who hopes to merit heaven by his own good works is prompted to obedience?

They are low in rank, and weak in influence.

It is upon the principle of a *barter*, by which he hopes, at the price of so much obedience, to entitle himself to the reward of heaven. This motive is prudential and selfish; and how does it operate? It is opposed by other motives, promising a more immediate reward, and offering gratifications far more in accordance with the natural taste than the felicity of heaven; and so it is often overpowered and forced to yield. And the man, finding that the law of God is generally conquered by the law of sin, falls back upon the conviction that a very imperfect obedience will meet the necessity of the case, and God in his mercy will be ready to pass by his errors and defects; and so he drinks his fill of worldly pleasure, indulges his vain imaginations as far as prudence and public opinion allow; once in the week takes his seat in the house of God, occasionally gives a small fraction of his superfluous wealth to aid the Church in her heavenly mission; when he has leisure reads a chapter or two in the Scriptures, and trusts that all will come right at the last. It may be that he has an easy and quiet end, and when he is gone men speak well of him, and the monumental marble is placed over his dust, publishing to the world his princely virtues and his unsullied reputation. But what is the account which he has gone to render in to God? Of what self denials in the cause of Christ, of what inward victories over corruption, of what struggles of faith with sense, has he to tell? Did the Spirit ever witness to him that he was born of God? Had he ever a living faith in Jesus the Saviour?

But how is it with one who has received the spirit of adoption; who has received Christ into his heart by faith, and "lived, and moved, and had his being" in Him? *The love of God*, the highest of all motives, becomes the principle of his life. He does his duty, not because he hopes thereby to entitle himself to God's favor, but because "the love of God constrains him" to do it. He *prefers* holiness to sin, and is led on to obedience by the ruling preference of his mind. He does not ask, "What is the *least* that is required of me as a Christian?" but, "How can I do *most* for Him who gave his life for me?" He is never satisfied with any existing attainments, but is constantly reaching forward after a higher conformity to the image of God; and when he has done

he says in sorrow, "I am an unprofitable servant." His st obedience falls so far short of what he sees to be the e standard of excellence, as to make him feel that after e must trust only in the merit and righteousness of God aviour for acceptance and salvation.

ch is the fruit of that system, of which Christ is the Alpha the Omega, when it is rightly understood and truly received. doctrine may be abused, and men may say, as they did in lays of St. Paul, "I will continue in sin, for grace abounds;" ever by one who knows any thing experimentally of the sys- f grace. The grand principle of that system is, *death to sin* l its degrees and forms; and "how can they who are dead to ive any longer therein?" And the dominion of sin is never lly destroyed through any other agencies than those which ed from the cross of Christ. Satan can be dispossessed of overeignty only by Him who went down into the grave to him, and there wrenched the bloody sceptre from his hand.

se, then, O sinner, and possess thy rest. Come to the ur, and you shall find peace to your soul. What the law t do, what your own efforts cannot accomplish, he will do ou. Whatever may be the darkness of your mind, he will you light; however greviously and deeply you may have , he will lift you up. Come to the Saviour, with

"All your sins against your God,
All your sins against his laws,
All your sins against his blood,
All your sins against his cause—
Sins as boundless as the sea!—
And hide them in Gethsemane!"

SERMON DLVI.

BY REV. JESSE GUERNSEY,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, DERBY, CONN.

THE COMPARATIVE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S OLD AGE.

"Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not."—PSALM lxxi. 18

AN obvious remark in entering upon the discussion of our subject is, that *the aged disciple is happy in the contemplation of his life's history.*

We are so constituted, that every evil deed, is in a measure, the instrument of its own punishment, and every act performed in obedience to conscience and to God the occasion of its own reward. Commit a deed of wrong, and he has ordained that, as an evil seed, it shall take root in the soil of your being, and unless grace interpose to prevent the result, shall henceforth blight and curse your existence by the bitterness of its fruit. Perform an act which God approves, and, by his decree, it shall be a seed whence shall spring a tree of happiness of immortal growth. This Heaven-ordained connection between evil done and evil ever afterwards suffered by the doer — between good performed and good ever afterward enjoyed by him who has performed it — is secured through the medium of memory, in combination with the conscience. Though sin is often anticipated with pleasure, it is never remembered but with self-reproach. Though duty is often looked forward to with trembling, it is never looked back upon as performed but with emotions of gladness. The memory of a life spent in wickedness is a garner of evil, ever pouring out its hoard of bitterness on the soul, and yet ever full; while that of a life devoted to the service of God is a treasure of bliss, as abundant as the wants of the soul, and as enduring as its immortality.

The aged Christian, if this be true, cannot but be happy in the contemplation of *his past conduct and influence.*

His happiness is not, indeed, unmixed and perfect. Though his history has been marked and moulded by a deep and uniform desire for conformity to the Saviour's image, he remembers that sin has lurked in his heart, and, through his heart, found its way into the life. He recognizes, as he casts his eye back over the path of his Christian pilgrimage, many a point at which his feet strayed from the straight and narrow way—many a point at which duty neglected, or evil indulged, attested the imperfection

f his love. This he laments with sorrow sincere and deep: for his he implores the forgiveness of a gracious and covenant-keeping lod.

But while there is here and there a page of sorrow in his history, it is contemplated, *as a whole*, with gladness. It contains he record of long years of allegiance and service, rendered in the pirit of obedience and love to his ever-loved and glorious Master. It contains the record of many an earnest conflict with emptation, and of many a victory won, through grace, over its tmost power. It contains the record of many a purpose which had its origin in a love that embraced both God and man; of nany a scheme of usefulness, the adaptation of whose every part o its end tells of a heavenly guidance, and proves the bestowal f a heavenly blessing. It contains the record of his activity in cattering the good seed of the kingdom, and of rich fruits of ighteousness already gathered as the result, and to be gathered n growing abundance for ever. It contains the record of many a plant of grace nurtured by his hand, and destined, through his nstrumentality, to an everlasting bloom in the paradise above. Happy the man who, from amid the feebleness of declining years, may look back over the pathway of such a history, and recognize it as his own! What a volume of blessedness is expressed, when from the lips of such an one is heard the inspired and inspiring language of an early disciple: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith!"

How different this from the words of self-reproach which often force themselves from the lips of one who, having grown old in sin, has become distinctly and painfully conscious that his earthly course is well nigh run! He has lived for the pursuit of selfish and worldly ends, and no matter how successful he may have been in their attainment, now that he stands on the brink of the grave, bearing the marks of age in every feature, and trembling in every limb with its weakness, his soul is haunted by the consciousness that, so far as all the higher and better purposes of his being are concerned, his life has been thrown away. Thus a burden of wretchedness is rolled upon his heart, under whose crushing weight he sinks to the tomb. Thus a cloud of woe draws its curtains around his trembling, shrinking spirit, amid whose darkness and gloom the flickering lamp of his life goes out. In view of the emotions of the aged disciple, as compared with those of the aged rejector of Christ, one may well exclaim: "'Let me die the death of the righteous' not only, but let me live his life, that I may enjoy his old age!"

2. He is happy in the contemplation of *the blessings which have marked his history.*

The kindness of his heavenly Father has not only strewn his

SERMON DLVI.

BY REV. JESSE GUERNSEY,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, DERBY, CONN.

THE COMPARATIVE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S OLD AGE.

"Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not."—PSALM lxxi. 18

AN obvious remark in entering upon the discussion of our subject is, that *the aged disciple is happy in the contemplation of his life's history.*

We are so constituted, that every evil deed, is in a measure, the instrument of its own punishment, and every act performed in obedience to conscience and to God the occasion of its own reward. Commit a deed of wrong, and he has ordained that, as an evil seed, it shall take root in the soil of your being, and unless grace interpose to prevent the result, shall henceforth blight and curse your existence by the bitterness of its fruit. Perform an act which God approves, and, by his decree, it shall be a seed whence shall spring a tree of happiness of immortal growth. This Heaven-ordained connection between evil done and evil ever afterwards suffered by the doer — between good performed and good ever afterward enjoyed by him who has performed it — is secured through the medium of memory, in combination with the conscience. Though sin is often anticipated with pleasure, it is never remembered but with self-reproach. Though duty is often looked forward to with trembling, it is never looked back upon as performed but with emotions of gladness. The memory of a life spent in wickedness is a garner of evil, ever pouring out its hoard of bitterness on the soul, and yet ever full; while that of a life devoted to the service of God is a treasure of bliss, as abundant as the wants of the soul, and as enduring as its immortality.

The aged Christian, if this be true, cannot but be happy in the contemplation of *his past conduct and influence.*

His happiness is not, indeed, unmixed and perfect. Though his history has been marked and moulded by a deep and uniform desire for conformity to the Saviour's image, he remembers that sin has lurked in his heart, and, through his heart, found its way into the life. He recognizes, as he casts his eye back over the path of his Christian pilgrimage, many a point at which his feet strayed from the straight and narrow way—many a point at which duty neglected, or evil indulged, attested the imperfection

of his love. This he laments with sorrow sincere and deep: for this he implores the forgiveness of a gracious and covenant-keeping God.

But while there is here and there a page of sorrow in his history, it is contemplated, *as a whole*, with gladness. It contains the record of long years of allegiance and service, rendered in the spirit of obedience and love to his ever-loved and glorious Master. It contains the record of many an earnest conflict with temptation, and of many a victory won, through grace, over its utmost power. It contains the record of many a purpose which had its origin in a love that embraced both God and man; of many a scheme of usefulness, the adaptation of whose every part to its end tells of a heavenly guidance, and proves the bestowal of a heavenly blessing. It contains the record of his activity in scattering the good seed of the kingdom, and of rich fruits of righteousness already gathered as the result, and to be gathered in growing abundance for ever. It contains the record of many a plant of grace nurtured by his hand, and destined, through his instrumentality, to an everlasting bloom in the paradise above. Happy the man who, from amid the feebleness of declining years, may look back over the pathway of such a history, and recognize it as his own! What a volume of blessedness is expressed, when from the lips of such an one is heard the inspired and inspiring language of an early disciple: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith!"

How different this from the words of self-reproach which often force themselves from the lips of one who, having grown old in sin, has become distinctly and painfully conscious that his earthly course is well nigh run! He has lived for the pursuit of selfish and worldly ends, and no matter how successful he may have been in their attainment, now that he stands on the brink of the grave, bearing the marks of age in every feature, and trembling in every limb with its weakness, his soul is haunted by the consciousness that, so far as all the higher and better purposes of his being are concerned, his life has been thrown away. Thus a burden of wretchedness is rolled upon his heart, under whose crushing weight he sinks to the tomb. Thus a cloud of woe draws its curtains around his trembling, shrinking spirit, amid whose darkness and gloom the flickering lamp of his life goes out. In view of the emotions of the aged disciple, as compared with those of the aged rejector of Christ, one may well exclaim: "'Let me die the death of the righteous' not only, but let me live his life, that I may enjoy his old age!"

2. He is happy in the contemplation of *the blessings which have marked his history.*

The kindness of his heavenly Father has not only strewn his

path with rich gifts of grace and providence, but so constituted him, that every present blessing sends forward its light and joy to the end of his being. If a peculiar bliss is mine to-day, it is mine not to-day alone, but so long as the memory of to-day shall endure.

The thoughts of the Christian in his old age are often sent back over the pathway of his life, and made to mark the points at which Heaven's gifts were most abundant and rich. Thus he ever and anon rejoices anew in the temporal mercies with which God has crowned his being. Thus he lives over again many a period bright with the joy and glory attendant upon the richest displays of redeeming grace. Thus he experiences afresh the blessedness of many a season passed in the retirement of the closet, when God has communed with him from the mercy seat, and, in answer to prayer, revealed himself to his soul in all the purity of his character, and in all the majesty and glory of his attributes. Thus he rejoices anew in the triumph of many an hour when, through faith, he has gained the victory over every doubt and fear, and joyfully rested in Christ as his Saviour. In view of these and kindred blessings experienced in the past, and joyfully remembered now, he is constrained to declare, that for him "to live is Christ," though he still feels that "to die is gain."

The memory of former joys never gladdens thus the heart of the aged transgressor. He has indeed received blessings at the hand of God with his every breath, but inasmuch as his reception of mercy's gifts has been accompanied by no tribute of grateful affection to their Author, he knows that in the judgement they will add to the weight of his condemnation. The remembrance of those gifts is made bitter by the accompanying thought that in the coming future they will prove to have been transformed by his own fault to curses. How striking, when contrasted with the experience of the aged sinner, appears the blessedness of the Christian, as from amid the infirmities of his old age he looks back upon the blessings included in his experience of the past!

8. He is happy in the contemplation of his life's history, *because of the lessons it has served to teach.* Life is a school, and experience a teacher. The Christian whose presence in this school has been continued during a long course of years, cannot but be indebted to its teacher for rich stores of truth and wisdom. He has learned a thousand times, and by a thousand proofs that there is a love in heaven which insures that to every Christian "all things shall work together for good." The record of his own inner life attests on many a page the tenderness of his heavenly Father's regard for the children of his grace, and affirms the blessedness of that history of which Christ is the model, the source and the centre. His observation of the movements of the Spirit and Providence of God gives abundant assurance that he is moving steadily and irresistibly onward toward the blessed-

ness and triumph of that predicted day, in which the Saviour's banner of righteousness shall wave over the earth in token of perfect and universal victory! These and kindred truths, impressed upon him alike through the medium of his own history and by the Word of God, he rejoices in as pledges all the realization of his brightest hopes with reference to his Saviour, himself and the world.

The same truths, or at least very many of them, the experience and observation of the aged sinner may have served to impress upon his heart; but such is his position in relation to them and in relation to God, that instead of being to him a source of happiness, they furnish fresh occasion for trembling in veiw of his condition and prospects. The blessedness of the aged disciple in the contemplation of his life's history, as contrasted with the aged sinner's wretchedness in the contemplation of his, may well prompt the prayer, "When I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not."

4. My next remark is, that *the aged disciple is happy in the continued possession of his life's chief good.*

Not so is it with the man whom the gray hairs and the tottering steps of age find still in his sins. He has outlived even the meagre enjoyments embraced in the experience of the worldling. Has he devoted his life-long energies to the pursuits of avarice? However great may have been the satisfaction he has experienced in the accumulation and investment of earthly treasure, that satisfaction has now become a thing of the past. The glittering splendours that are wont to adorn the home of wealth may, indeed, be scattered in profusion around him, but beyond the supply of his few daily wants, his riches contribute naught to his enjoyment. Increasing infirmities serve hourly to remind him, that his hold on the good to whose attainment he has given the cares and labors of a lifetime, is constantly slackening, and that soon that good will have passed for ever from his grasp.

Has he been content to give himself up to the pursuit of the degraded and degrading pleasures of the sensualist? The period for the enjoyment of these has, with him, gone by for ever. His every sense is dulled and palsied by age. His every sensual experience, it may be, has become an experience of weakness and pain.

Has he found satisfaction amid the stir and excitement of business? His business days are numbered now. His step has become too uncertain and feeble to admit of a longer familiarity with the farm, the manufactory, or the counting-room. However irksome may be the hours unemployed, save in communion with his own thoughts, there is for him no escape from them, except through the portals of the tomb. Through the portals of the tomb, did I say? There is *no* escape.

Has his chief joy been experienced in the society of the fashion-

vice ended, your crown awarded. In your places will soon stand those upon whom the frosts of age are now only beginning to fall, and afterwards those who are yet amid the years of their fullest vigor and strength. Let these not think of life's later years as a burden, nor shrink at the thought of their approach. Let them rather look forward to the period when they shall be "old and gray-headed"—if they shall be permitted to behold it—as one which grace is adequate to make the most cheerful and happy of their lives. Let the desire to rejoice in the highest blessedness of the Christian's old age be among the motives that shall induce the highest devotion during the years by which it is preceded!

A word to such of the young and middle-aged as are numbered with the unconverted, will conclude this discourse. Few of your number, in comparison with the whole, will ever know what it is to be bowed down under the burden of years. This your observation of the ravages of death compels you to admit; and yet each of you doubtless indulges the hope, if not the expectation, that *he* shall be spared to old age. If this hope is be realized in the case of any, they are one day to know the self-reproaches, the joylessness and hopelessness of the aged transgressor, or rejoice in the blessedness of the aged disciple. Which? Spend your life in sin, and your old age shall be all a burden and a curse. Consecrate the freshness of youth (if it be still yours) and the strength of manhood to God, and your declining years shall constitute a rich inheritance of joy, and be a fitting prelude to the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore.

THE AMERICAN
NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 10, Vol. xxv. OCTOBER, 1851. Whole No. 298.

SERMON DLVII.

BY REV. DAVID MAGIE, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE SEC. PRES. CHURCH, ELIZABETHTOWN, N. J.

THE BELIEVER'S PEACE.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."—ISAIAH 26 : 3.

LIFE is in all cases a pilgrimage, and to the best of men it brings its seasons of sorrow, as well as of joy. From causes too numerous to mention, fear sometimes prevails over hope; and the soul, instead of enjoying those consolations, which are neither few nor small, is cast down and disquieted. Such are the checkquered scenes through which believers pass, that they often become discouraged because of the way.

These vicissitudes, though trying to the feelings, are, nevertheless, proof of real spirituality. A stone, every one knows, is the same in its properties and aspects all the year round, but not so the tree, at the foot of which it lies. Here we see perpetual changes, frequent revival and decay. If leafless branches and a naked top appear in the months of storm and frost, we expect to find buds, and blossoms, and fruit in the season of warmth and showers. The reason is: in the one case no principle of life exists, while in the other there is all along a real, abiding, energetic vitality. And this, let me say, marks the difference between a genuine, honest-hearted Christian, and the man that merely has a name to live, but is dead. Wherever the root of the matter is found, there will be a lamenting after the Lord, if there is no actual rejoicing in him.

These lights and shadows of the divine life add to the interest with which we contemplate a truly pious character. It is useful to follow such an one in days of darkness, as well as those of light; and the tears on his cheeks are no less instructive than the smiles which irradiate his countenance. If his path to a better world is rough and thorny, this only the more clearly evinces the riches of those resources that grace is able to supply.

But though sorrow may be evidence of spirituality as well as joy, we love to see men happy in God; and what is more,

there are good reasons for being so. Light, we are told, is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The language before us is still more explicit: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." These are precious words—replete with encouragement to such as are harassed with doubts, and beset with temptations. We may consider the text as an infallible remedy for that worst of all forms of human ill—a burdened and disconsolate spirit. There are three things here which invite and claim attention: the *Author* of the peace referred to, its elevated *nature*, and the *means* of its enjoyment. The subject addresses itself with special emphasis to such as walk in darkness, and see little or no light.

We begin with the *Author* of this peace, which we learn is none other than *God himself*.

The mind of man is too active in its essence, and too large in its capacity, even to find rest, unless it be in its Maker. Experience and observation teach this scarcely less clearly than the Bible itself. Were all the holy and happy beings in the universe to concentrate their powers upon the one object of giving peace to a single individual, they would find it a hopeless task. What can the kindest parent do towards making a beloved child truly and permanently happy? How is the fondness of a brother's love, or the tenderness of a sister's affection to displace the hidden anguish of the heart, and fill it with calmness? The warmest earthly friendship fails here. This is work for an Almighty arm—an achievement for divine grace.

If the thing is ever done, God must do it; and he can do it only by leading the mind to repose in himself, as the supreme and unchanging good None but the Creator, the Preserver, and the Redeemer of the soul can allay its apprehensions, soothe its restlessness, and impart to it undisturbed tranquility. There must be a combination here of that same power and mercy which once said to the waves of the sea, "Peace, be still." Mere external and sublunary good can avail nothing to ease the torment of the mind. Man, viewed either in the helplessness of his condition as a creature, or the alarm of his guilt as a sinner, must look to the rock that is higher than himself. In vain is it that you fill his coffers, and encompass him with the pomps and luxuries of life. The possessions of the world, unhallowed by the blessing, and unsweetned by the smiles of a gracious God and a redeeming Saviour, can never contribute one iota towards his real and enduring happiness. There will still be a void, which, if ever filled at all, must be filled with the fullness of God. Most certain is it, that that part of man which we call mind can never be effectually quieted, unless it be done by Him who has the skill to understand, and the ability to supply all its wants.

But here a question must be met and satisfactorily answered, before we are able to proceed a single step. Admit, as admit we must, that we are sinners, justly exposed to the divine

displeasure, how can God, the righteous governor of this world, ever be at peace with us? This is a difficulty which no wisdom of the wise, nor understanding of the prudent, has power to solve. But blessed be God, there is One in human form, clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, who has prevailed to open the book of divine mercy, and loose the seven seales thereof. To meet the consequences growing out of man's sinfulness on the one hand, and God's justice on the other, the glorious scheme of redemption was planned and executed. Jesus undertook to be a peace-maker between heaven and earth, and he has accomplished the work effectually.

As we turn over the leaves of the Inspired Volume, we find the features of a great plan of reconciliation standing out every where. Patriarchs, prophets and apostles all unite in illustrating its character, and setting forth its glory. It is the one grand and gracious idea which runs through and distinguishes the entire book, from the promise to our first parents in Eden, to the last utterance of the beloved John in Patmos. The chief reason why God has spoken to man at all, is to make known the terms on which He can consistently be at peace with him again, and own him as His. To procure a blessing so necessary and so inestimable, Christ died on the cross; to announce it, a choir of angels came down over the plains of Bethlehem; and to awaken it in the bosom, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter is given. This is the blood-bought legacy which Jesus bequeathed to his disciples, when he was about to return to his Father and our Father, and his God and our God. Nor can any son or daughter of Adam ever enjoy true peace, who does not build his hopes of acceptance with his Maker on the atonement of the cross.

Think for a moment what it cost to purchase this rich blessing of peace for the mind agitated by guilt, and filled with apprehensions. That curse which the law denounces against every soul of man that doeth evil, had to be met and borne, before a single overture of reconciliation could be made, or a single word of friendship uttered. But who could so bring God and man together, that concord might again be established between them? The person to do it must be divine, otherwise he could make no satisfaction to violated justice; and he must at the same time be human, otherwise he could not die as an expiation. To merrit what was necessary, and to suffer what was necessary, a double nature was required—that of deity, and that of humanity. Infinite worthiness was indespensible; and as this could belong only to God, Jesus had to be God: and partaking of flesh and blood was indispensable; and as this could belong only to man, Jesus had to be man.

This doctrine of incarnate divinity—immaculate God with us—one in human form, and yet the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace—is essential to every well-*founded hope in the* bosom of a sinner. It is Jehovah's *method of bringing* back to its ancient allegiance a revolted

province of his empire, and leading a multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, to throw down their arms, and sue for pardon. God has set forth his only begotton and well-beloved Son as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins; and if offenders are received into favor at all, it must be in this way. As there is in the whole universe but one source of true peace, so there is but one channel through which it can come to men. In vain is it, as thousands have found by sad experience, that we run here and there, knocking at every door, and asking, Who will show us any good? "The depth saith, is it not in me; and the sea saith, is it not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed as the price thereof."

This priceless blessing is in God, and of God, and can only be enjoyed by those who are humble and self-emptied enough to receive it as His gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The provision is, from beginning to end, of his making, and it must be embraced only in the way of his pointing out.

Who is there that, apart from God's favor as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, has ever tasted solid joy and satisfaction of spirit? You might as well talk of making the waters of the ocean fresh, by showers from the sky. The Most High has assured men that they can find peace only where they lost it, in conscious union with himself, and happy participation of his own blessedness.

Such, we are all aware, is the constitution of the human mind, that it can find real repose only in God. To essay to fill it with the riches, and satisfy it with the honors of this poor world, is but to tantalize its hopes, and mock its disquietudes. It must have food adapted to its character, or it will prey upon itself, and eat away its own vitality. If anything is plain, it is that the good which the soul craves comes from God alone; and equally plain is it, that it can come from him only through the channel of redeeming mercy. Here may peace be found, grounded upon promises, revealed in emblems, and secured by pledges which can never fail. It has a divine authorship, and well may it strengthen those who possess it with all might in the inner man.

We now pass on to inquire, secondly, into the nature of this peace, denominated in the text perfect.

The blessing, coming as it does directly from God, will cer-
tainly bear the impress of its high and holy origin. By tha
sort of connection, which is sure to subsist between the eff
and its cause, there must always be something in the inwa
repose of a truly good man to mark its source and reveal
hand which bestows it. His joy though not at present all t
it will be, or all that it might be, is still a joy, with which
stranger intermeddleth not. What if the stream does take
occasional particles of impurity as it pursues its way, and
come somewhat discoloured by the s[illegible] which it flow

Less cannot be expected. But this does not prevent the existence of qualites in it which tell of its fountain and spring head. Thus too in every case will it be with the man who has felt the pangs of a guilty conscience, and has learned that healing and peace are to be found in God alone. His very defects are mingled with excellences, which show that they come from above.

This is a point which ought to be carefully considered. The laws of the human mind are such that a man's happiness will partake of the character of the object on which he rests. If, therefore, the peace which he feels is derived from an uncertain and unsatisfying world, the peace itself will be just as uncertain and unsatisfying as is the world that supplies it. Should he have no other basis of repose than the affections of kind and tender friends, when these friends die he must be left disconsolate. Should he gather wealth, and build mansions, and acquire fame, to make him happy, when these fail he is wretched. But let him once put his trust in the immutable and eternal God, and his peace, so far as the seurces of it is concerned, will be no less immutable and eternal than God himself. Its nature, like his, will be abiding, and its duration, like his, will be everlasting. The cross, the blessed though shameful cross, opens a new and living way of confidence in God, and like the ladder in Jacob's vision, becomes a medium of intercourse between man and his Maker which nothing can interrupt.

Hence, as regards its ground-work, the believer's peace may be said to be perfect for its resting-place is immovable. Whether pangs of conviction may have preceded it, and whatever doubts and fears may still attend upon it, the foundation upon which it is built, being less than the promise and the oath of God, can never be overturned. Only let the sinner cast himself upon the mercy provided for him, and offered to him, and urged upon him, and he need never be ashamed or confounded. This is doing precisely what he ought to do, and what he is encouraged to do ; and doing it, he is as safe from eventual ruin, and may feel as secure in present peace, as the power and grace of God can possibly render him. No one, not even Satan, or the world, or his conscience, can lay anything to his charge, successfully. God himself has engaged to be his justifier, and who is there in heaven, earth, or hell, to condemn ?

There is that in the plan of salvation, revealed in the Bible and embraced by faith, which is adapted to remove every doubt and silence every apprehension. God is now regarded as a Father, Christ as an elder brother, and the Holy Spirit as a Comforter ; and what reason is there why the greatest offender should give way to despondency ? In the great doctrines of the gospel every man on earth is authorised to take refuge, assured that here there is grace to pardon his sins, *strength to hold up his steps*, and joys to refresh his spirits.

His helper is omniscient and omnipresent, all-wise and all-merciful, and how can he come short at last? Here he may take sanctuary, and in spite of the malice of the devil, the temptations of the world, and the corruptions of his own heart, find settled peace and consolation. Such an one is surrounded by munitions of rocks, and overthrow is impossible. A voice rising above all the tumult of inward and outward trouble says in his ears, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

And as this peace is secure in its foundation, so is it also large in its measure. At one time it rises like a river, and swells and rolls onward, until it bears both sin and sorrow away into the land of forgetfulness. At another it takes the tempted and careworn believer up, and carries him along as on the wings of an eagle, towards the celestial world. Water cannot quench the bright and buoyant flame, nor can floods drown it, nor can persecution dim its lustre. Most truly may we say of it, it is a peace which "the world cannot give nor take away."

This blessing is enhanced too by the fact that it comes in when all other joys go out, and erects its brightest monuments on the ruins of earthly hopes. It is when heart and flesh fail that its blessedness is generally most fully felt. There is no trial which it cannot endure, no sorrow which it cannot remove, no darkness which it cannot dispel, no agonies which it cannot alleviate! No wonder that Jesus calls it his peace, and bequeathes it to his disciples as the best legacy in his power to bestow. That very repose in God which so filled and cheered his own holy bosom, he delights to share with all who love him and wait for his appearing and his kingdom. Who can measure the height and depth, the length and breadth of such a gift as this? Never does it loom up so largely as when it takes its position by the dying couch, and the opening grave, and speaks of joys which can never fade away. Here is something that can afford support even amidst the swellings of Jordan.

Can we turn aside and see what light this peace of God can diffuse through the chamber of disease; how it can tranquilize the bosom of the poor widow surrounded with her helpless babes; what serenity it can shed around the tottering steps of some aged saint; and how it can irradiate the gloom even of the grave itself, and not feel that it is rightly called perfect? True, it might often be more fully possessed on earth, and it will be more fully possessed in heaven. But if we remember what it has actually done in ten thousand instances, when the dearest friends have died, and property has taken wings and flown away, and one pall of sadness has seemed to overspread the entire world, we shall feel that it is impossible to give it too good a name, or attach to it too high a value.

That this peace is not always as full in degree as it is sure in its foundation, is not the fault of the Giver or the gift. It may

be temporarily broken by sinful indulgences; it may be interrupted by a derangement of the mental or physical system; and it may be for a while withdrawn, to produce a deeper feeling of dependence. The privilege of the Christian is, in this respect, by far in advance of his actual and ascertained attainments. It is but uttering a well-known truth to say, that many good men are often in heavines through manifold temptations, and their peace is more like the uncertain brook than the perpetual river, moving calmly unto the ocean. Too frequently do they hang down their heads in despondency and refuse to be comforted. Still there is a blessing for them rich, and large beyond expression, and nothing is necessary but that they should embrace it, and rejoice in it as their own. This prepares the way to contemplate—

Thirdly, the *means* of enjoying this peace, called *staying the mind on God, or trusting in him.*

The provided mercy, in order that it may work out its appropriate results, must become an accepted and an embraced mercy. So far as it respects any real repose of heart, it matters not that there is a blessing, of which God is the author, and which is perfect in its nature, unless this blessing does, in fact, come into our possession, and come as it were part of ourselves. There must be a connecting link between the Benefactor and the recipient; and that connecting link, is a simple, earnest, child-like faith in Christ. Hear in what delightful language the blessing itself, as well as the medium of its conveyance, is spoken of: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Mark, it is the mind's resting in God, staying on him, and confiding in his Word, upon the terms of the gospel, that secures this peace. Nothing else will answer the purpose. Whatever was the strength of the ark built by Noah, or its fitness to float on the water, it could save from the deluge none, except such as entered it, and were inclosed by its doors. An anchor may be sufficiently heavy and firmly set to hold the vessel in the most violent storm, but it can never do this without a cable to connect the two together. So the mere fact that Jesus died on the cross to procure peace, is of itself, and by itself, nothing at all. In addition to what God has done, there is something for man to do, or actual, personal salvation is impossible. The language of the Bible is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else."

Let this be done in the first instance, and be repeated as often as clouds overcast the mind and doubts arise in the heart, and there can be nothing to hinder the enjoyment of peace. A way is now opened, in which man can come into favor with God, without the least detriment to the claims of divine justice, or the least injury to the interests of the divine government. Whatever *the sinfulness* of believers, the atonement of

Christ is underneath them as an eternal rock; and whatever their guilt, the righteousness of Christ is upon them as a spotless robe; and built on this rock, and clad in this robe, they have nothing to fear. In the single, grand and precious truth, that Jesus has undertaken the work of Mediator, there is that which can convey peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart, let the winds blow ever so high, and the waves roar ever so loud. Nothing is surrendered in regard to the strictness and sanction of the law, and yet that law is so satisfied, that it has no more any curse to utter. Justice and mercy meet on this gracious platform, one securing all its demands in the sufferings of the Saviour, and the other displaying all its triumphs in the deliverance of the sinner.

Man's position in this whole matter is that of a mere pauper, a simple recipient. Instead of working out a righteousness of his own, he is to submit to a righteousness, or yield to the acceptance of a righteousness, which is unto all and upon all them that believe. Just to take what is brought to him and laid down at his door, is all that is required. Calling the joys of heaven his own, depends on nothing as its antecedent but the embracing the message which God gives of his Son.

To believe in Christ simply, truly, entirely, without a thought of any goodness to be looked for, either in the feelings of the mind or the way of the life, is the true catholicon—the genuine panacea—the real heart's ease. Its power is almost omnipotent. All those dark wants and dim apprehensions which make the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint, are sure to give way before the influence of a cordial trust of Jesus, as the Son of God. Every thing turns on faith, and the man who can believe, and who does believe, is authorized to possess a settled and stable peace. This, be it remembered, is not a blessing which comes meritoriously, or by right of purchase, either from his own doings or from his own deservings. As his hope of the divine favor rests exclusively on the atonement of Christ, neither personal merit nor personal demerit has anything to do with a tranquil frame of mind. Trusting and not doing, relying on another and not confiding in himself, is the main point. So far as the question of acceptance is concerned, and hence so far as the question of peace is concerned, nothing is necessary but a bare staying of the mind on Christ. This done, all is done; this neglected, nothing is done.

It is a conclusion founded on the fullest experience, that upon the plan, Do and live, real and permanent peace of mind never has been attained, and never can be. This object is gained only when we really enter into the spirit of—Believe and be saved. Once let the feeling of a simple trust in the merits of the Saviour take possession of the bosom, and it will go further to produce abiding consolation than all the tears and vigils of the most perfect devotee. It is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to the mercy of God, *that we are saved*. Here is something complete in itself, and

admitting of no addition from man's performances, however costly and splendid they may be. Bunyan had this idea of the matter. when he put the following beautiful language into the mouth of his pilgrim: "There are four things which give me peace. When I think on what I saw on the cross, that will do it; and when I look upon the embroidered coat, that will do it; and when my thoughts wax warm about the country whither I am going, that will do it." There is a volume of experimental theology in these few sentences. Wonderful man! Though not skilled in the science of the schools, he was taught by One from whose lips wisdom distils as the dew.

To the real child of God there can be no enigma in such a statement as this. It is but declaring in other and more impressive words that peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory, are found only in connection with faith in Christ, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Here, and here alone. can the soul find its needed and appropriate rest. The vine never falls and trails in the dust, so long as its tendrils adhere to the sturdy oak, and the believer is never disquieted so long as he leans on the arm of Jehovah Jesus. Here is firm footing; this is solid ground. The good man has a support, strong as the fastnesses of the everlasting mountains.

Whatever of richness and sublimity and glory there is in the gospel, it all belongs to the believer. Let him but stay himself on the Lord, and trust in the God of his salvation. and though he walk in darkness and see no light, he is just as safe for both worlds as the power and grace of God can make him. And when we say this, we say enough. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him—in those that hope in his mercy."

Nothing now remains, my Christian friends, but that you *make this blessing more fully your own.*

It cannot be denied that many truly pious men are less happy than the principles which they adopt would seem to warrant, and far less happy than their usefulness plainly requires. Owing to fightings without and fears within, they write bitter things against themselves and refuse to be comforted. This anxious, depressed state of mind brings up an evil report of the good land, and for the honor of the Saviour, as well as the benefit of others, ought if possible to be overcome. Nothing is more lovely in itself, and more creditable to religion, than the calm, even, settled peace of a true believer.

Never then, forget that the great secret of reaching and retaining this priceless blessing, is a bare staying of the mind on God in his own way, and for the ends which he himself proposes. Nothing can be added to simple believing, nor must anything be taken from it. We cannot, on the one hand, make too much of those works of righteousness, which the gospel *both commands* and implies as evidence of sincerity; nor *can we, on the other,* make too little of them as grounds of de-

pendence. As it respects the basis of a good hope towards God, we must have something to lean upon, not done by us, but done for us--not meritorious in us, but beneficial to us. None of you would think of leaving the awakened sinner short of the point of looking entirely away from himself and exclusively to the Saviour for peace; and why should the troubled Christian any more be left short of the same point? Peace can be renewed and kept alive only by the instrumentality which produces it. It originates in faith and it lives by faith.

There is more, much more in this sort of direct application to Christ for help, than good men, in general, seem to be aware of. Let the cloud which often gathers over the mind from the stirrings of inward corruption, the cares of the world and the temptations of Satan, be as black as it may be, one single act of trust in the Saviour, one single looking to him as the Lord our righteousness, one single laying of the soul under the droppings of his blood, is sufficient to drive it all away. In vain is it to waste your time in self-exhausting efforts and self-reconciling struggles. It is the simple, quiet, entire trusting in Jesus, that breaks the power of sin, and fills the bosom with peace.

My dear brethren, you have a right to be happy, such as no other men in the world can have. Could you only rise to the steady and triumphant exercise of that faith which will enable you to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," you would have nothing to fear. What if created props be taken from under you? it is only that you may lean more implicitly on the arm of sin-forgiving and covenant-keeping God. Let the gourds wither, so long as the shadow of the tree of life is left. God promises to bless his people with peace, and it is but an ill return for the multitude of his loving-kindness towards you, to persist in yielding to alarm and agitation. "Will you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise?" To be for ever falling into despondency, after receiving so many tokens of the Divine favor, and enjoying so many seasons of communion with God, is, to say the least of it, basely ungrateful. Christ deserves no such treatment at your hands. No matter how numerous your sins are, nor how many the struggles you may feel in your own bosoms, only believe, and you shall be made whole of whatsoever disease you have.

As for trials, internal and external, they must needs come. Life, even in its brightest and best aspect, is very like a journey over a stormy sea. But the Gospel provides a harbor, which stretches out its sheltering arms, and beckons you to enter that you may find repose on its placid waters. Oh, why remain out upon the ocean, exposed to storm and blast? Fear not to enter and cast anchor here, and you will then be just as safe as the power of God, the love of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit, can possibly render you. I charge you, suffer no hidden grief to prey like a canker on your heart. Let come what will, you have only to enter the chambers provided for

you in the Gospel of Christ, and hide yourselves there for a little moment until the indignation be overpast.

Never dream of repose anywhere else. In vain did the dove fly to and fro, with panting breath and weary wing over a deluged world. She found no rest till she approached the ark. But the moment she drew to this sacred structure, a friendly hand was ready to open the window and take her in.

Come what may, the heart that reposes in God as a Father, in Christ as a Saviour, and in the Spirit as a Comforter, has a home and a dwellin-place. Many a sore trial may await you, and many a tedious scene lie before you, ere the heavenly mansions open for your reception, or the crown of Glory be placed on your head. It may please Him, who understands your true interests better than yourselves do, to permit the last enemy to come upon you in some terrific form. But notwithstanding all, be assured of this, that neither things present, nor things to come shall ever separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Cheer up then, ye that hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. As sure as there is truth in the promises, and stability in the oath of Jehovah, Satan will be disappointed of his prey. Only stay your minds upon God, and you need never be confounded, world without end.

SERMON DLVIII.

BY REV. ALBERT BARNES,

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

THE REJECTED CALL OF WISDOM.

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."—PROV. I: 24–28.

THIS is the language of Wisdom; that is of Religion, addressing men. Wisdom or Religion personified, appealing to mankind, reminding them of the variety of the calls and remonstrances which it makes, and of the manner in which those calls and remonstrances are commonly met: assuring them that, as a consequence of thus regarding the appeals of religion, a day of distress and anguish must come upon them, and that it will be too late to avail themselves of the counsels and [illegible]

ings of true religion. The form is that of direct address to those who have disregarded the appeals of religion, and that will be the best form for us to follow in illustrating the subject. Let us take up the points suggested in the text, in their order, supposing that the voice of wisdom in the text is now addressing those who are in this house.

I. The manner in which it has called upon you—in which the appeals of wisdom and of religion have been made; "I have called," "I have stretched out my hand."

The appeal here may be regarded as made to all; for, though its form be varied, there are none whom religion has not addressed; none whom she has not invited to her embrace. There are none whose attention has not been called to it; none who has not been entreated to become children of God. The invitations and the calls of heavenly wisdom were among the first that fell on the ear in childhood; they are among those which have been most frequently and urgently repeated; they are those which have come with the best claims to attention. In the manner, the variety, the intensity, the tenderness, the unwearied nature, and the sleepless watchfulness of appeal, nothing has occurred that can be compared with the calls which have been made to you to abandon a sinful course, and to give your heart to God. They were made to you in childhood; they were repeated in youth; they were continued in riper years; they have been pressed upon you with all the more earnestness as old age approached. The subject has been urged upon your attention when you have been sick; when you have been alone, and when you have been with others; in the silence of the night-watches, and in the great congregation. Conscience has plead with you, and urged you to give up your sins, to pray, to turn to God, to secure the salvation of your souls; and through your conscience, wisdom has always been speaking to you, and urging you to tread in the straight and narrow path. Reason has appealed to you, and wisdom has spoken to you through its appeals. It had but one voice, urging the propriety of serving God, of keeping his commands, of securing the salvation of the soul; admonishing you of the danger of neglect and delay, and pressing upon you the supreme importance of religion; and in all the tumult of passion, and all the whirl of pleasure, and all the storms of ambition, it has been telling you that for man the path of wisdom is to lay a good foundation for the world to come. The providences of God have appealed to you, and called you to attend to the soul. Now, when you have been sick, and thought you felt the cold finger of death laid on your palpitating, struggling heart; now, when raised up from your bed, brought from the borders of the grave, to live a little longer; now, when just escaped from the perils of shipwreck—snatched from a watery grave; now, when the pestilence breathing around you has made you feel that you were walking among the *dying and* the dead; now, when you have seen the young,

the talented and the gay, the bridegroom and the bride suddenly cut off; now, when you have seen your own dear son or daughter, father, mother, wife, or husband die, and utter darkness and desolation came into your dwelling, religion appealed to you; showed you how vain was all earthly good; how sure was death to you; how much you needed the consolations of Christian hope; what a poor, miserable, comfortless man you are, with no prospect of heaven, and no God to go to, in your troubles. Self-interest has appealed to you in behalf of religion. Your great interests are in religion—your most momentous concerns beyond the grave. There you are to live for ever. There your condition is to be unchanging. There you are to be happy or miserable to all eternity, and happiness or misery there, once begun is only to increase—never to diminish, never to terminate. Here all is soon to be at an end: joy or sorrow, poverty or wealth, honor or shame—all are soon to close. The vapor on the mountain side soon vanishes away; so will your life. The colors so gorgeously painted on the cloud that lies along the western sky soon disappear; so will all that is gay and gorgeous in life. Eternity alone is unchanging, and eternity is all. Your great interests are there; and wisdom stands amidst these vanishing vapors, and these evanescent beauties, and tells you that your great interests lie all beyond the tomb, in the "spirit world," and urges you to make *that* safe and secure. Your friends have appealed to you, and religion has appealed to you through them. Your friends, your best friends, have most earnestly conjured you to give up the world and sin, and to yield the heart to God. Here a father, here a mother; there a wife, there a sister, there a child, there a bosom companion, has plead with you and urged you with strong crying and tears, to become a Christian. You cannot recollect the scenes of Childhood—not even the nursery—without remembering the appeals that broke on the infant ear in favor of religion. You cannot go back in memory to the days of your youth, without thinking of the path that led to the house of God, the Sabbath and the sanctuary, and the appeals which religion made to you then. You cannot think of heaven and the dwellers there, without thinking of some there, parent, or pastor, or bosom friend, who often plead with you to give the heart to God. You cannot go into the still and crowded cemetry, without fancying that the mother or the sister who sleeps there still speaks, and urges the son, the brother, to give up the world, and prepare to die. The ministers of religion have appealed to you, and wisdom has spoken to you in their appeals. The pastor whom you have seen reason only to venerate, whose sincerity you have never doubted, and the force of whose appeals you have often felt, has plead with you. Strangers who were eloquent, have come to confirm their appeals, and to urge the claims of religion by new arguments and illustrations. You do not doubt their sincerity; you cannot *gainsay the reasonableness* of their appeals; you have often

under those appeals been "almost persuaded to be a Christian." And, finally, the Spirit of God, accompanying all these appeals, has often pressed the subject of religion upon you as a personal matter, and brought it home to the conscience and the heart. You have been serious. You have wept. You have prayed. You have been found among anxious inquirers after salvation. You have opened the Word of God, desirous of knowing what is truth, and have longed for some one to come and tell you how a sinner may be saved. A hundred, perhaps a thousand times you have been serious, thoughtful, pensive. The world has seemed to you then to have little that was worth living for, and somehow, you could scarcely tell how, it had lost all its charms; its gayest scenes had become cheerless; and the mind was drawn along to the grave, to the judgment seat, to a vast eternity.

In the silent evening, when returning from your daily toil, you have been pensive and sad—perhaps its gathering shadows inevitably reminding you of the shades of that solemn evening which closes life, "when no man can work," On your bed, in the night-watches, you have found your eyes held waking;" for, somehow, whether by the stillness, the darkness, or the resemblance to death, you could not tell—you thought how silent and dark is the grave, how solemn is eternity. In times of disappointment, when your plans have been frustrated, and blasted, the Spirit of God has made you thoughtful, and and led you to enquire whether there is not a world where disappointment will never come. In times of chagrin and mortification, when your claims to notice and distinction were not allowed as you supposed they should have been, you have been sad and you could not help thinking of another world. In the storm, the tempest, when the lightenings have played and when the thunders have crashed—at midnight—in the graveyard—you have been made seroius, pensive, solemn. You have felt that you were to die: you have felt that you were a sinner; you have felt that it is a solemn thing to go into the world that is eternal, and to the abodes that are now unseen. Then the Spirit of the living God addressed you; then religion spake to you; then "wisdom" warned you, called you, admonished you, entreated you to give up your sins, to give up the world, to give up your heart to God; then the heavenly voice called you to prepare to meet God.

II. The manner of the reception of this call. "Ye refused;" "no man regarded." You have neglected these calls and warnings; you paid no attention to them, as if they did not pertain to you, or as if they had no claim to your regard. You have desired a state of mind that would be indifferent to them, and where you need not be made sad by them, or wearied and worried with them. You went, notwithstanding these calls, and engaged in other things, as if you had not been summoned to God and to heaven. One went to his farm, and another to his merchandise, and another to his amusements, and another to

his life of sin. In your counting-room, or in your schemes of ambition, or in the world of gayety, you have led such a life that you expected and desired not to be troubled with serious impressions about God and the soul. You have neglected to pray when you ought to have prayed; you have refused to read the Bible when you ought to have sought counsel from God; you have been among the gay and the thoughtless, when you ought to have been among the praying and the devout. You have studiously concealed your feelings when you have been serious; you have hoped that time, and company, and business would make you cheerful again. You have endeavored to embrace some plausible form of doctrine that would be an opiate to the conscience, and allow you undisturbed and unannoyed to enjoy the world; you have sought some device by which you might lead a life of vanity without trouble from the dread of death. You have endeavored so to form your plans of life that you need not be distressed with the constant fear of dying, and so that you need not be chafed and galled by the appeals made to you to serve God. When these solemn truths of religion have been pressed closely on your attention; when your conscience has been troubled: when you have felt that you were indeed a sinner before God, and that you *ought* to yield to him and serve him; then to these feelings and convictions you have offered a decided resistance. You have refused to yield when you knew you ought to yield; you have refused to pray when you knew you ought to pray; you have refused to become a Christian when you knew you ought to be a meek and humble follower of the Saviour. You have argued against the truth; you have cavilled against the truth; you have urged excuses that you might not obey the truth; you have sought plausible reasons for neglecting to do what you knew to be your duty; you have taken refuge under the imperfection of Christians, for not being yourself a Christian; you have embraced false, and absurd, and monstrous opinions, simply because you did not wish to give up the world and become a Christian. You have done this long. In some cases it has been the work of a life; in all cases it has been a leading object of life thus far. Had you yielded when God first called you, you would long since have been a Christian. But with many of you it has become a settled *habit* to resist all the calls and appeals of religion, and you expect to be successful in doing it hereafter as you have been heretofore. You go to a funeral with that expectation; you go to church with that expectation; you listen to the closest arguments in favor of religion with that expectation; you sit under the most pungent appeals of the gospel with that expectation. You came here at the present time with no expectation of yielding to God and becoming a Christian: you expect now to leave this house, unmoved and unconverted by all that I can say. You are often convinced by our arguments, but you will not yield to them; you are often urged powerfully by your own conscience to give

yourself to God, but you refuse. While God calls you to a life of religion, you turn contemptuously to a life of vanity; while he calls you to admire his character and to love him, you become lost in admiration of dress; while he calls you to go to the cross as a poor penitent, to confess your sins and be saved, you go to the ball-room to dissipate serious reflections, to forget your Saviour, and to trifle away the precious moments of probation; while he points you to the "narrow way," and the "strait gate," you crowd along regardless, with the multitudes to the "wide gate"—the "broad way" that "leadeth to destruction." If you ask, Who? I answer, You, ye gay, ye worldly, ye prayerless, ye vain, ye "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" ye who live as if this world were all, and are conscious that you turn a deaf ear to all the calls and invitations of the gospel of Christ. You know who are meant; for you have not lived thus long without knowing that it is the purpose of your own life *not* to be a Christian.

III. The effect of neglecting and disregarding these calls. "When your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." Death will come; he will certainly come. He cannot be evaded; he cannot be put back; he cannot be made to take his steps any slower. Oh, he will come! All that lives on earth will die: every beast, bird, and creeping thing; the eagle, the humming-bird, the insect that flutters in the sun-beam; every tree, and shrub, and flower—the oak, the pine, the acacia, the moss that grows over the wall; every monarch, every peasant—every rich man, every poor man—every slave, every master of a slave—every man, every woman, every child—every old man that prides himself on his honors and his wealth, every young man that prides himself on his talents or his strength, every maiden that prides herself on her beauty. Oh, all will die! I am in a world of death; I am amidst the dying and the dead; I see not a living thing in all my rambles that will not die—no man, no woman, no child—no bird, no beast, no plant, no tree. The eagle that cuts the air cannot fly above it; the monster of the deep cannot dive below it; the tiny insect cannot make itself so insignificant that death will not notice it; leviathan cannot, with his great strength, struggle against it. The Christian will die; the sinner will die—yea, the sinner! Your wealth cannot save you; your accomplishments cannot save you. Death cares for none of these things. They are all trifles, gewgaws—beneath his notice. He no more loves "a shining" mark than an ignoble one; he has no more pride in cutting down the rich man than the poor man—the daughter of beauty and of fashion than the daughter of ugliness and of sin. He loves to level the thistle as well as the rosebud, the bramble as the magnolia, the briar as the cedar of Lebanon. He cares as little for the robe of ermine as for the beggar's rags; as little for your richest vestments and gayest apparel as for

blanket of the savage. You will die, and the fear of death come upon you. Death comes just as he is—pale, solemn, stern, determined on his work. He hears no cry for ; he regards no shriek of terror. He comes steady, cer- unchanged and unchangeable in his purpose, to take you f your bed of down ; to hurry you away from your splen- welling ; to call you out of the assembly-room—taking way from the companions that will miss you but for a nt, and then resume their dance—that you may die. will come. He has been advancing towards you aince egan to breathe. He has kept on his way, always advan- to meet you, while you have been asleep or awake ; and have gone north, or south, or east, or west, he has s put himself in your path—how near or how remote you never known. Death will come. He has always been g—advancing, never receding, and soon his baleful w will fall upon your path, and that shadow deepen and become more chilly, like an avadncing e ; and then his dark form will stand right before you, en you and the light of the living world, and you will be e dark valley. Death will come—fearful enough under circumstances, even if you are a Christian ; awful, un- ably awful, if you are not.

e fear of the judgment-day will come upon you, for that ot always be avoided. It is to come to all human beings, hat is to be a solemn day when we shall give up our ac- for the deeds done in the body, and hear the sentence h is to determine our everlasting doom. You have en- red, and to a melancholy extent have succeeded in your vors, to make your mind insensible to this subject ; and ps for months, possibly even for years, it has never ly occurred to you that you are to appear before your on so solemn a business. Yet, in the cares of life, in ngrossment of business, in the whirl of pleasure, you have y concealed this fact from your view—you have not af- its reality ; you have only put a little further from you must, sooner or later, be contemplated in all the solemn- its import. Somewhere, either when in health, and be- we are driven to it by the mere fear of death ; or on the f lingering sickness, where we may calmly contemplate ture world ; or in the terror and alarm of sudden death, ust look at the judgment bar ; we must think of giving r account ; we must reflect on the solemnity of that mo- when we shall stand before our final Judge. The of this will come upon the sinner. You cannot always be sible to it ; you cannot always be immersed in the cares is world ; You cannot always be busy with briefs, or merchandise ; you cannot always move in the circles of ity, amidst songs and dances ; for you must die, and must *fore your Judge. It* is a solemn thing for a man to be *ned before a human* tribunal on a high charge of crime

and when the question whether he is to live or die is to depend on the opening of the lips of the foreman of the jury, and the utterance of one little word, and neither by indifference nor by jesting can he make anything else of it: and so it will be a much more solemn thing to stand before your final judge, when the question of your everlasting joy or sorrow—of life or death eternal—shall depend on the opening of His lips. The apprehension of this shall come upon you; and all that there is that is fearful in the apprehension will be experienced, and will be heightened by all the pains that you have taken to forget it, and by all your folly in refusing to hearken to the voice of wisdom.

Desolation and destruction will come upon the impenitent and ungodly, and upon you if you are found among the impenitent and the ungodly—upon all who have continued to refuse while God has called, who have not regarded when he has stretched out his hands. God says: "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." He has solemly said also, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell." He has sollemnly declared also, that "the wicked is drawn away in his wickedness." He has, as if borne down himself with a sense of the folly, the wickedness, and the danger of man, with all the tender solicitude of a Father and a Friend, asked of the wicked, "Why will ye die—why will ye die?" He has plead; he has warned; he has invited; he still pleads, warns, invites, that this fearful doom may not come upon you. Yet come it will if you be found among those that refuse to hear him, and that turn away when he calls. And you are doing nothing to prevent it; you can do but one thing that will prevent it. Indifference to danger does not turn danger away; argument does not; cavil does not; ridicule does not; scorn does not; pride of rank or station, wealth, flattery, accomplishment does not—You may call it "cant" in me to preach about death—but death comes; you may call it gloom that I speak of the coffin and the grave—but there they are; you may ridicule the apprehension of the judgment—but there it is; you may curl the lip, and turn away with scorn at the mention of hell—but there its fires for ever burn. Ridicule, cavil, scorn, have never saved one human being from the grave, and never will; scorn, cavil, ridicule, will never save one sinner from destruction. Death is not turned away by contempt; nor are the fires of hell put out by a jibe. Man standing on the borders of the grave, and about to launch forth to worlds unknown, as in solemn circumstances, and he changes nothing; he diminishes no dangers; he puts off no evil, he extinguishes no fires that kindle along his future path, because he can toss his head and laugh at these things, or because he can meet his Maker's communications with scoffs and scorn. "Woe unto yout hat laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep," "for the day cometh that shall burn as an *oven; and all the* proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as

stubble ; and the day cometh that shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

IV. When these things come it will be too late to cry for mercy. "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer them : they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

There must be a limit to the calls of religion and mercy, for life is very brief, and they all lie this side the grave ; and soon the inviting voice of wisdom will cease to call you, for you will lie in the tomb. Then you will no more hear the voice of wisdom and mercy that you have here so often disregarded in this sanctuary, or when addressed to you by the friend, or by the Providence and Spirit of God. That voice will indeed continue to be addressed to the living ; but you will not then be among the living. And there must be a limit to these calls from the nature of the case. Can you suppose that God will *for ever* call hardened and incorrigible sinners? Can you suppose that he will always appeal to the skeptic and the caviller, and bear with his skepticism and cavils through a vast eternity? Can you suppose that anywhere, and everywhere, in all the boundlessness of his future being, the sinner, as he chooses, may pause and claim the mercy of God? This cannot be ; and, *somewhere*, there MUST be a limit to the offers of mercy to men—the termination of the day of grace to the guilty.

That *may* occur before you shall reach the death-bed near as that is to you, and short as the journey thither. Who has said that it may not? And why should it not? May not the mind become so worldly, and the heart so vain, and the conscience so "seared," and the life so wicked, and the will so obdurate, and the whole soul so utterly shattered and ruined by sin, that conversion shall be hopeless and ruin certain? You may be a sinner so hardened, so bold, so daring, so malignant ; you may have been so often called, and yet have refused ; to you God may have so long stretched out the hand, and you may have so disregarded it ; the offers of the Gospel may have been so often made to you, and you may have so often rejected them, and in such forms ; you may have been so often near the kingdom, and so often grieved the Spirit of God, that the great matter of your eternal destiny may be practically settled before you die, and all that was designed in your probation may be closed for ever.

It may occur *on* a death-bed. Are there no dying sinners that *seem* to cry for mercy in vain ; to whom no response is given ; who have no peace in their last moments, to show that their cry is heard? Are there none who then bitterly bewail the follies of a past life, and who look back with anguish on their violated Sabbaths and their abused mercies, and on the sins and *follies of youth*, and who have no peace, as they look *forward to a vast eternity*? Do all sinners die peacefully,

calmly, with the assurance that their last cry is heard, and that the sins of a long and guilty life are all blotted out, as the effect of a momentary cry, though of bitterest anguish, on a bed of death? Has God anywhere intimated to guilty and hardened men that he *will* hear their cry then; and that they may mock him, blaspheme him, and curse him, and revile him—may cavil at his claims, and spurn his mercy, and trample on the blood of his Son and grieve his Spirit—be athiests, and skeptics, and scoffers, through a long life—and then utter a momentary shriek of anguish on a death-bed, with no more love for him than they had in their worst days, and no confidence in the atonement, and no pleading in the name of Jesus, and suppose that the great account of sin will be cancelled by this? Why should men believe that? Oh, there are death-beds where there is bitter anguish, and strong crying, and tears, and where there is no hope; where, though the soul *be* overwhelmed with remorse, and utter a shriek of anguish, there is no return of peace, as if the cry were heard, and the sinner leaves the world in despair.

And there is a world where the cry of mercy is never heard. If there is not, what is the meaning of our Saviour in the representation that Lazarus was not permitted to go to the rich man in hell with a drop of water to cool his parched tongue? What is the meaning of the lamentation which sinners are represented as making—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved?" What is the meaning when it is said, "The time is at hand; he which is holy let him be holy still; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still?" What is the meaning of this fact, that in all the revelations which God has made to men respecting the future world, there is no hint that another Saviour will be provided there; that the offers of mercy will be repeated there; that one sinner ever has escaped from those dark regions to the world of light? That which sinners fear, when most filled with alarm, *will* come upon them, and the world where the cry for mercy is never heard will be all that it was ever supposed to be by the sinner in his darkest days of gloom and trembling.

I have gone through with the principal topics in my text, and here I close. I am not anxious to vindicate the sentiments which I have expressed in this discourse, for they are not my own: I have merely given an exposition of a portion of the Word of God: and it is not my warning, but His. I have led you step by step in simply *expanding* the language of the text, and I am sure there no one can say I have perverted or disguised its meaning. Yet, these are solemn truths! I meant that they should appear to be; I have felt it to be so as I have prepared them. They are truths that are not palatable to the unrenewed heart, to those who love the world, to those who live for gayety, frivolity, and sin: perhaps they will not be to you. I did not suppose that they would be palatable, and I could not make them so. They lie across the path of your

plans, your wishes, your pleasures. I intended they should; I could not so present the truth of God that it would not. They may make you angry. They have made sinners angry a thousand times; they have made us who preach them, angry, when *we* lived like you for pleasure and ambition, and we have never learned how to exhibit the truth so that it will *not* make sinners angry. They may make you angry against God for having revealed such truths. I could not help that, much as I would desire to do it. They may make you feel that this is a dark world; that the life of a sinner is dark; that the future is dark and gloomy. I have no way by which I could help that, for I believe that it is so to a sinner, and while he remains such I do not see how it can be otherwise. They may make you hate the preacher or they may make you turn away from the sanctuary determined never to enter it again; they may make you resolved to bestow no further thought on these things, and to give yourself up to sin, and worldliness, and vanity. I could not help that. But how will that relieve the matter? Does that change the fact that you are to die; that there is a judgment; that there is a vast eternity; that the wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness? Is not the grave just before you, though you laugh? Is not the judgment bar, though you treat it with scorn? Is not God in the heavens, though you lift your arms against him?

I beseech you to treat these things as rational beings, dealing with realities. You do not mock a father's agony when he dies, or a sister's suffering when she pines away with consumption. You do not laugh when the pestilence walks our streets, turning the faces of men pale, and numbering the gay and the strong with the dead. Treat realities as realities, serious things as serious things, death as death, God as God, eternity as eternity. Are there none here who are willing to do so? Perhaps there are, "All this," some one among you may be saying to himself, "all this is true. It is true of me. It is a description of *my* life. Thus I have been called in a thousand ways and times to be a child of God. Thus I have refused; thus I have disregarded those calls. Thus I have slighted the offers of mercy; thus I have grieved the Spirit; thus I have given myself to the world, regardless of the life to come." Is it so? Is there one who feels thus, and who speaks thus? Blessed be God if there is. Is there in this house an eye that weeps, a heart that is penitent, a sinner who feels that he is guilty before God? Turn, sinner, turn. It is not too late for the penitent; for the relenting heart there still is mercy. God once more calls; once more he stretches out the hand. Though it may be the last call—for from this house you may go home to lie down and die—yet it is enough. It is all *you* want, even should you never hear the sound of the gospel again. Embrace the call, whether to you it be the last or not, and *your* eternal welfare will be secure. And whether you be weeping *or hardened, penitent* or impenitent, it *may* be the last. From

this sanctuary, my hearer, you *may* go forth to hear the gospel no more. Death, already having traveled far, may meet you; may give you the fatal stroke; may come to execute his great commission to call you before God. Oh, it is a solemn thing to hear the gospel for the last time, to go way where the offer of salvation will never be borne to the ear again!

THE MASTER KEY OF THE UNIVERSE.

Holiness is the master key of the universe. Born to die, you are fated to travel hence. You are but a sojourner here, as all your fathers before you were. Earth is not your home. The summons of death comes, and you must go forth. But wither? Become God's charge and child, be a renewed man by God's grace, and you are gifted virtually with the freedom of the universe.

In traversing our little, narrow earth, there is much gained for the convenience and ease of the pilgrim when he has a circulating letter of credit that will secure him funds at any great town which he visits; and, by his knowledge of the language, he can converse with the natives of all the lands that he may enter. He has thus a sort of universal pass-key, alike to resources and intercourse. He is everywhere at home. But did you ever reflect, that while the knowledge of the schools may be comparatively useless after death, the knowledge, love and likeness of your God furnish a portable wealth which death only makes more valuable? Did you never remember that sympathy with Jehovah is the language of the spirit—a celestial dialect intelligible to all holy intelligences in all worlds? Go where you may—be your journey far into the azure depths of space, till our poor planet becomes but a dim spangle in the outermost hem of the robe of night—you are, if truly godly, nowhere a stranger, for everywhere your Father's sceptre is over you, and your Father's grateful and loving subjects encounter you.

Schemers have toiled to invent a universal character that all people of the earth might use in common. Let there be graven on your souls, regenerate and sanctified, the characters of true holiness and of divine sonship, and they are recognized by all the hierarchies of heaven, and angels welcome and cherish in you, fellow-heirs and younger brothers of their Sovereign and your Redeemer. Soon the hand of the destroyer will have torn you from earthly home, kindred and friends. But if you are godly, it is the exchange of a perishable for an imperishable abode; of a family small and erring, and soon to be scattered, for the general assembly and church of the first-born, a *countless host*, and all immortal, impeccable and indivisible.

In that great gathering, think you the swarthy Karen whom Christ's gospel found in the jungle will be at any loss, because of the differences of their earthly dialects, to greet and hold fraternal intercourse with the American backwoodsman, who, knowing but our language, and that uncouthly, sent by the missionary his sympathies and alms to this the missionary convert? Think you the Sandwich Islander, renewed, sanctified, and glorified, will be at a loss to address him who was once his unknown patron and brother on these western shores? No; their prayers, long since offered—this in Karen, and this in Hawaiian, and that in English—blended in the ear of their common Lord, and returned to earth in mutual and intermingling blessings. Shall not, think you, their love and likeness to that same Lord—a Lord now near and visible—make them capable of full sympathy and freest intercourse?—*Dr. W. R. Williams.*

THE SHORTNESS OF TIME.

If time be so short; if the space allotted to each one of us be so narrow; if already but a small remnant of our lives be left to us, and if much evil and suffering be apportioned to us all, surely we may with truth observe, that time is not worth living for. What can there be in this perishing world that is worthy the pursuit of the soul? True, there are many things very attractive to the sense—very fascinating to the imagination. Many delightful objects around us solicit our attention; many that are fitted to charm every faculty of our mind, and gratify every passion of our nature—riches, and gayety, and dissipation, and honor—all the innocent and all the guilty gratifications of life: and these things have a natural and almost irresistable hold on our affections. But look at them through the medium of eternity, and what are they? Day-dreams—short, uncertain, fleeting vanities; fashions of this world that are passing away. They will not bear minute investigation; they have in them all the seeds of corruption and decay; they elude the eager grasp, and disappoint the most anxious devotee to their charms; they are like those fog-banks which often deceive the oldest and most experienced mariners, and delude them with the hope of land, but when their imagination is wrought up to the highest pitch of expectation, and they already fancy that they discover the well-known headlands and the desired haven, the sun breaks through, the wind arises, and the deceitful phantom vanishes in air! So are all those things of time and sense which men idolize and adore in the place of God and eternity. The Scripture reveals their nature and their doom; *they are transitory*; they "perish with the using." *And can they, then, satisfy?* The soul of man is formed

to embrace the noblest ideas of the highest enjoyments, even those of infinite duration; it is formed for God and heaven, and with these alone can it be fully satisfied. Therefore it is, that men devoted to this world and to the things of time are never contented; they discover, after all their eager pursuit of business and pleasure, that, as the Scripture expresses it, they are but "feeding on ashes!"—*Rev. Francis Close.*

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 11. Vol. XXV.] NOVEMBER, 1851. [Whole No. 299.

SERMON DLIX.

BY Rev. EDWARD N. KIRK, Boston, Mass.

THE DANGER AND EVIL OF DEPARTING FROM GOD.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.—Heb. 3: 12.

The gospel is heaven's music on earth; a melody of two voices. The air is sung by Love; and the burden of the song is, Salvation by Mercy. If this were the only voice, and this its only theme, you would perhaps hear nothing but tones of tender sympathy, of fervent affection, of joy, of hope, of delight. But this song is sung to the soul in the midst of peril. You therefore hear an accompanying voice singing a subordinate but harmonious part. It is tremulous and solemn, sometimes awful, as it utters the notes of warning. We are now to listen to it, as it announces

THE DANGER AND EVIL OF DEPARTING FROM GOD.

We inquire—

I. *What is it to depart from God?*

Men sustain many relations to God which can never be destroyed. He will always be our Creator, Preserver, Sovereign and Judge. So one may always sustain to his fellow-creatures certain relations that do not depend on his character or principles; often not upon his will. But a man cannot be said to live as a social being unless he loves and is loved; and at the basis of love is confidence. We may continue to be the creatures of God, to live on his goodness, to be held in the hollow of his hand, to remain under the inspection of his eye, to be responsible to him; but we have departed from him at an infinite distance, if we exercise no confidence, heart-confidence in him.

There are, then, what may be called a fundamental departure from God, and various forms of separation consequent on that.

1. *The essential, fundamental departure of the soul from God is the want of confidence.*

Confidence in *things* is that act of reason through the understanding by which the mind knows the properties of substances, and calculates with certainty upon their action. Confidence in *persons* is an act of reason through the heart, by which it knows

their qualities, and calculates with certainty upon their actions. By the first, man lives in communion with nature; by the last, in communion with man and God. If a philosopher were to lose his confidence in nature, or if ordinary men should, they would cease to live in harmony with things around them, and even to sustain life. A man cannot step, or eat, or try to speak, without confidence in nature. He cannot live in society without confidence in man. He cannot live in communion with God without confidence in him. What it is, can be better understood than defined. The infant exercises it when, looking into the mother's face, its soul is tranquilized to a perfect repose. We may strengthen confidence by reasoning and by evidence; we may sometimes arrive at it by reasoning; we should always be able to defend it by substantial reasons; yet in itself it is not reason, but the heart in exercise. Another being is felt, in a measure, to be its life; the source of its joy, satisfaction, repose and hope.

Now, when the eternal Jehovah ceases to be that to any soul, it has departed from the living God. It has either no confidence in any being, or it has given all its confidence to creatures, in place of the Creator.

It may be contemplated, however, more distinctly in some of those forms.

2. *Which are the result of that fundamental departure from Him.*

Confidence in God involves a belief of his Word, because the veracity and faithfulness of a being is one of the great objects of confidence. The believer knows not only that God is, in distinction from nature and man, but that he is a Person of the most absolute and unchangeable veracity and faithfulness. Unbelief is the doubt or denial of this. What he has declared is not received as truth. This may manifest itself in many forms. There may be skepticism as to the moral character of the Scriptures. Some think they tend to form a spirit contrary to sound morality. Some have no confidence in the narratives of miraculous events. Some reject their testimony as to the character of man. Some deny the threatenings as descriptive of future events. To some, the promises do not appear worthy of their personal confidence; to others, the requirements are not received as the very commands of our Almighty Creator.

This is the evil heart of unbelief. The testimony of the Creator is not received; and this is because there is want of confidence in him. By faith we know that the worlds were made of nothing. Now there may be an old heathen maxim, "Out of nothing nothing comes," or there may be inherent difficulties in the case which makes it seem reasonable to some to doubt this fact; but he that has confidence in the power and veracity of God will have no difficulty in believing this statement. And so it will be found with all the other statements of the Scriptures: confidence in God will make it easy to believe them; and the

loss of that confidence will give increasing weight to the objections and difficulties. Difficulties about the threatenings, about the Trinity, election and atonement, gain force in the same way. Suppose, now, that Abraham had indulged an evil heart of unbelief, he would have found it impossible to surmount this objection: "It cannot be right, even in God, to require me to slay my innocent child;" or this: "If Isaac is slain, the promise must fail." The rich young ruler stumbled here; he had no confidence that Christ could make him happy, if he should give up all his earthly possessions. Dives could not believe that he would be made to weep and wail, and cry for one drop of water, and find an impassable gulf between him and heaven, "just for the few sins he committed in this life." But if he had had confidence in God as infinitely holy, inflexibly just, and unchangeably true, it would have been to him as manifest in his palace as it became in his prison of despair. The thief on the cross might have been staggered by the greatness of his guilt, the strength of his evil habits, the weakness manifested by the dying Saviour. But he staggered not through unbelief. He trusted in the word of Christ, because he had confidence in the character of Christ. In fact, faith as belief must spring out of faith as confidence. And if the Scriptures present God in the unity of his essence, we believe it; if in the plurality of persons, we believe it. If the Father is represented as giving the Son to be a sacrifice for us, as offering him to sinful men; if as accepting the sinner in Christ; or if the Son is represented as offering himself to us, and the Spirit; or if the Spirit is represented as offering to enter our hearts, there is nothing contradictory in all this, but something every way accordant with our necessities and the Divine goodness. When Adam and Eve heard the threatening upon the act of eating of the prohibited tree, and the prohibition itself, they doubtless acquiesced in it as every way right. But when their confidence in God was abandoned, they lost the impression and the belief of the command and the threatening. When the little church continued praying until the day of Pentacost, their confidence in God remained unwavering. But an evil heart of unbelief would have chilled their zeal, and scattered them from the prayer-meeting to some occupation that should seem more reasonable and profitable as well as more agreeable. Men will not continue near to God in fervent, importunate prayer after their confidence in him is shaken. Their interests in the Scriptures will abate, because, insensibly to themselves, they are losing their confidence in their truth and importance.

Confidence in God also involves love. If he has infinite moral excellence, and that is perceived by any one, he of course loves him for it. A person may believe that God is good without loving him; but to have confidence implies love, so far as excellence is perceived. When, therefore, one begins to be indifferent, and

cold, and thoughtless of God, he has departed from him. He does not any more believe that God is that perfectly excellent and gracious Being he once thought him to be. "Thou has left thy first love," is the charge against the Ephesian Church. The heart has greater confidence in some other person or some object. The world in some form has come to be supremely excellent in his view, and God is forsaken. Another effect of losing confidence in God is, cessation of obedience. Who will hesitate to obey God, when he believes that God is reasonable, wise, holy, just and good, and that in keeping his commandments there is great reward? We have departed from him by an evil heart of unbelief when we can transgress his commandments, and neglect his requirements.

And, again, we depart from God when we cease to hope in him. Our confidence is gone. Although he has uttered so many gracious promises, yet, if we do not confide in him, we can have no confidence in them.

Suppose a man like Daniel, threatened with the lion's den if he prays to God; yet he hopes for deliverance against the king's command and threat, because he has confidence in God. Suppose a woman corrupt as the woman of Sychar; she knows that Christ can purify and exalt the most debased nature to the purity and glory of an archangel: that is the faith that saves her. Suppose Peter to be overwhelmed with a sense of his guilt in denying Christ, yet he knows that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and he has hope. But Judas has departed from God, and fled to Mammon. He has no confidence, and so becomes a prey to despair.

Now we inquire—

II. *How we are in danger of departing from God.*

We may say, in a word, it is by having a tendency to unbelief: "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief."

1. *It is a danger arising from the heart.*

The heart of man naturally swarms with those venomous reptiles that are the enemies of piety; varying in their modifications in different persons; in all essentially the same. Their name is legion. One of the most dangerous positions we can occupy is that of doubting their existence, power and subtlety. One is sensual dulness. If you would see it in the extreme, observe a man who has just come out of a fit of drunkenness. All his finer sensibilities are blunted; he has no eyes to see spiritual beauty—no heart to relish anything but brutal gratifications. If you would see it in a form less revolting, take a person who has been reading romance until the midnight hour of Saturday, and then attempts to hear or read the Word of God on Sunday. They hear, says Jesus, but do not understand, because their ear is waxed dull of hearing; they have not "their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." This was the ground of our Sav-

iour's caution: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life." It is easy to blunt the edge of our spiritual sensibilities, and to lose every perception of God's being and excellence.

Worldliness is another; the insinuation into the heart of that dreadful falsehood, that we can be happy without God, but cannot be happy without the world.

Softness, effeminacy, and cowardice are sources of infidelity. The burden, the shame, the protracted pain of the cross, the greater evils to which it will still make us liable, begin to weigh heavily with some, as they go back from Jesus.

Sloth is an enemy of faith. Faith must be kept vigorous by exercise. Unbelief grows best when we are spiritually asleep. If you remit study, meditation, prayer, and the activities of a self-denying obedience, you will gradually lose your perception and relish of the truth, and so your confidence in God.

Perverseness of will is an enemy of faith. There is, in some natures, a sullenness which makes them enjoy being contrary. They must have something to oppose, somebody to be opposed to, or they are not contented. The indulgence of that temper destroys faith.

Self-will, too; no matter in what way it is indulged, even in the petty affairs of life, it separates the soul from its Saviour.

Irascibility, or an angry disposition, is the enemy of faith. It is never indulged but it brings a cloud over the eye of faith, and chills the heart of love.

Covetousness, or a narrow clinging to money and possessions, will separate the heart from God.

Pride is another of our enemies. Sometimes it makes one delight in doubting where others believe; in showing off skill in argument; in despising where others reverence. It makes us reluctant to yield our prejudices; ready to take offense; averse to humbling ourselves before man or God.

Now we may retain the forms of religion after the very root of it has decayed; and when there is no longer confidence in God, there is no more real communion with God, no more life.

But we may trace it beyond the heart.

2. *It is induced by negligence*, which permits those poisonous weeds to grow.

We begin to depart from God by indulging wrong thoughts. And we must be in the habit of questioning our imaginations and fancies, and not throw the reins on their necks; for, if we do, they will carry us away from God and holiness.

By refusing the cross. Just where Christ would humble us we may resist. Just where he requires self-denial, we refuse to obey. The very opportunity may have come for us mightily, to attack our corruptions, and we neglect it; there begins a secret declension. We are not so strong in God from that time.

Neglect of the right kind of meditation. The confidence of the heart in God is to be strengthened

By discovering the reasonableness of that confidence :

By meditating on God's excellence and glory ;

By vigorously applying the mind to discover them ;

By filling the mind with the promises, and their fulfillment to others, and to us ; and with the glory of their final fulfillment.

Now we must see—

III. *The evil of departing from God.* It is all summed up in this : he is God, " the living God." See,

1. *Its immediate consequences.*

It affects the whole character. Faith is the basis of all genuine excellence. But faith in God is the sum of Christian character. Here let us stand, fixed in this principle. After we have ceased to regard our heavenly Father as a Person, possessed of a moral nature, and an infinitely perfect character, all the rest of our religion is a delusion, our life is hollow ; we have a name to live, and are dead. If any grace appears to be growing, it must be sickly, and soon wither. We have departed from the living God.

Its immediate consequences are realized, too, in the sense of diminished happiness. Every exercise of rational confidence in a being benefits us, and makes us happy. Distrust, or the want of trust is our misery. And after a being has reposed in God, and felt the strong support of his omnipotent arm, it is only wonderful that the same person, on becoming a backslider does not become deranged. What a change! To go from God to his creatures for support, for consolation ; to abandon the arm of the Eternal, and lean on an arm of flesh! " Departing from the living God " to go to a dead creature! If it were not gradual, it would produce an overwhelming shock, which might well unsettle reason. In prosperity there is no sheltering in the living God, in adversity there is no abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. Jesus has ceased to be the shepherd, and the poor soul wanders and stumbles on deceitful mountains, or in miry plains. And,

2. *Its ultimate results are terrible.*

By this unbelief those Jews lost Canaan who came out of Egypt with Moses ; and it is this their example the apostle is here citing as the occasion of his warning.

It will certainly tend to diminish the glory of heaven to him who thus declines. All that dark season is a time of unfitting for heaven. It is a period taken out from the brief season allotted to preparation. This is sad to contemplate.

It will diminish his usefulness. What good is such a person doing by his example, by his conversation, his prayers? He has departed from the *living God.* There is no life, no power in him.

It may be the precursor of eternal death. How does he know

that he shall ever recover from it? His former experience cannot assure him; the doctrine of "perseverance" cannot, for he has lost the evidence that he is in Christ, or ever was.

Here is a call for repentance to such as have departed from the living God. Let them contemplate the folly of incurring such a loss as the loss of God's friendship and favor and fellowship; of repose in the almighty and faithful Jehovah, the Friend of Abraham; the cessation of their own lofty and holy conceptions of the infinitely glorious One. Once they could adore him; the soul seemed to stand on the verge of infinity, and soar on its joyous wings, upward and upward, toward an ever increasingly attractive smile of parental love. But the infinite is now annihilated; and the soul has lost its wings, and sunk down to creep with the curse-burdened serpent on the ground, and feed on dust! Once the soul could cast its cares on the compassionate Redeemer. Now it must bear them alone. Once it was full of hope; the future was an opening vista of brightness, of repose, of blessedness. Now it is dark, repulsive, fearful. And for what has all this been sacrificed? Here is Esau again selling his birth-right for a mess of pottage. Not a moment should then be lost in recovering what may be recovered of these squandered treasures of the heart. Repentance is the first step; that is, the *belief* of the evil of departing thus from God. This precedes all true belief in the mercy of God. To increase the strength of this godly sorrow, let memory recall the kind of service which has been rendered to God during the period of unbelief. Formality, heartlessness, insincerity have made them offensive to the heart-searching Jehovah, unprofitable to yourselves, and a reproach to Him whom they mocked. There has been unspeakable wickedness in our pride and blindness of heart. We have refused to see the truth, to bow to Christ's golden sceptre, to accept his grace, to trust his faithfulness.

Precious opportunities have been wasted, opportunities of improvement and of usefulness. Every Sabbath passed in unbelief is a misspent day; every sermon thus heard has furnished an opportunity of spiritual profit, only to be despised. The precious Word of God has lain neglected; providences have been unimproved; the influences of the Holy Spirit have been trampled under foot; the Lord's Supper has been a solemn farce to the careless participant. Every opportunity of prayer has been permitted to pass by as a cloud that had no rain. Precious, precious hours, days, privileges, opportunities wasted! These should bring the heart contrite and broken to God's altar while yet there is hope.

Who can measure the wickedness of treating God thus! His perfections of being and of character, his veracity, mercy, faithfulness, justice, all set at naught; and by such a creature as man, poor, insignificant man; by a man redeemed at such a cost; by

a man who has been enlightened and impressed by God's truth; a man who has vowed to serve him! Oh! let the heart break as it reviews the past; such a length of time spent in backsliding! How many days has it been; how many months; how many years? And all this time the soul has hung in fearful suspense over the hypocrite's hell. All this time there has been a reckless indifference to the welfare or the woe of others' souls. Surely the evil heart of unbelief is the evil to be lamented above all that generally causes grief. What is the loss of property, of health, of friends, of human favor compared with it!

Both professors of religion and those who have made no such profession should inquire, in view of the admonition we have been considering: Is there in me an evil heart of unbelief? "Take heed," is the word of warning. "Brethren" are addressed; for it is certain that all that are not united to Christ and his people by faith have in them an evil heart of unbelief. Brethren are addressed, because neither their profession nor their experience prevents them from having this fearful possession. "Any of you," says the warning voice. Your station, your pretensions, others' estimate of you, will not make it impossible in your case. Look within: "lest there be *in* you an evil heart of unbelief." And to guide your research it may be well to inquire about your views of God himself. Do they affect the heart, either awaking reverence, or love, or trust, or godly sorrow? When you think of God, do you desire his favor above all good; do you lay your property, your plans, your person, your interests at his footstool; do you desire to cast down every barrier between your soul and him; does his loveliness, his glory, his love satisfy your soul? Inquire after your plans in life; what are you living for; what pleases you most, or with whom and where you are most contented. Inquire after your ordinary thoughts; in what channel they run, when you are in the Lord's house, in company, in business, alone. Inquire after your habits of reading, the character of the books you read, your motive in reading them, the impressions they leave on you. Inquire after your conversation; whether the general tenor of it is to promote faith or unbelief. There is not so much mystery about the loss of spiritual light and religious joy as many imagine. It is the withdrawal of God's Holy Spirit that accounts for it all. But the reasons of his departure may ordinarily be seen in some of the modes of grieving him here alluded to. We depart from God in one of two ways: by neglecting either the law or the gospel; by ceasing either to believe or to obey. If we try to obey without faith in Christ, we depart by a legal spirit from the God of grace. If we trust in Christ that we may be saved without obedience, benevolence, self-denial, activity, earnestness in doing right and doing good, we equally depart from the living God. The life of faith may be summarily defined: making Christ our trust, and Christ our example.

SERMON DLX.

BY REV. R. H. SEELEY, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

THE RELIGIOUS FEELINGS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE UNREGENERATE, NOT GENUINE PIETY.

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."—HOSEA 6 : 4.

MAN was made for religion, just as he was made for human society. He is no more truly adapted by his social nature for association with others of his kind, than he is adapted by his moral nature to possess the affections and fulfill the duties of a religious life.

The entrance of sin into the world has essentially and sadly affected man in both respects. The proper operations of his social nature are marred, misdirected, obstructed, or destroyed by the prevalence of selfishness and evil passions. In like manner the faculties of his religious nature are misdirected, perverted, (or "depraved,") abused, and (so far as the purposes for which they were created are concerned) destroyed by the selfish and corrupt tendencies which sin has introduced.

Man's abuse of his social nature discovers itself in the contentions, the cruelties, the crimes that are witnessed in families, neighborhoods, and nations, to such an extent that the earth seems like a vast Golgotha covered with the grim and ghastly remains of those who have spent their earthly career in preying on each other's hopes, and happiness, and life.

His abuse of his religious nature appears in the atheisms and impieties, the false religions and superstitions, the errors in doctrine and in practice, which cause the world to appear like another Sodom, in which there is scarcely the proportionate number of the upright to save it from destruction.

Nevertheless, though they are thus seriously and sadly affected in consequence of the fall, neither man's social nor his religious nature is entirely eradicated. Both remain, and, under certain conditions, may be brought into a right state of activity; since proper cultivation in the one case, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost in the other, may give the supremacy to better principles, and bring him to the development of a character for which he was evidently intended by his Creator.

But if this be so, if man's religious nature is not annihilated, but simply depraved by the fall, it is not unreasonable to suppose that its activities and developments in the unregenerate

may sometimes resemble those which are witnessed in the truly regenerated children of God.

The text, as we understand it, contains a reference to a case of this kind. The children of Ephraim and Judah are reproved because their "*goodness* is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew."

The "goodness" here spoken of is not genuine piety, because those by whom it was exhibited were exceedingly rebellious against the Most High, and were charged with the commission of many severe offenses. But, at times, they appeared to take pleasure in knowing duty and performing it. They were occasionally moved with devotional feelings and made a fair show of piety. But this "goodness" did not spring from the depths of their being. It was not a perpetual product of their life. It was not a "fruit of the Spirit." Their religious feelings and activities were transient, ineffective, and worthless. They were like a "morning cloud," that, at the opening day, gives promise of a refreshing shower, but which has not sufficient density to keep it together, and, after floating about for a time without results, finally evaporates and disappears. They are like the "early dew," which looks refreshing and beautiful, as its diamond drops hang trembling on each leaf and flower, but which is dissipated and gone with the first beams of the risen sun.

The text thus teaches us the following important truth, viz.: that *the religious feelings and activities of the unregenerate are not genuine piety.*

In illustrating this truth, let us,

I. *Contemplate the fact that religious feelings and activities are frequently witnessed in the unregenerate.*

This fact may be clearly demonstrated by examples drawn from the Holy Scriptures. In the thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel we are informed that the hearers of the prophet took delight in listening to the truths he spake, and exhorted each other to attend the sanctuary. They worshipped with much outward decorum and apparent devoutness, and professed much affection for the prophet, for the truth, and for its Author. But notwithstanding these appearances of piety, they failed in deeds of righteousness. They would not forsake their sins. They were but passive receivers of religious impressions, which were as transient and ineffective as the emotions aroused in the soul by the voice of a pleasant singer, who skilfully accompanies his song with a well-tuned instrument.

The hearers of the prophet Isaiah presented still stronger indications of piety. They *sought the Lord daily, and delighted to know his ways.* They desired the ordinances of justice, and took delight in approaching to God—in performing the acts of devotion. It is evident, from the description, that their religious nature was not annihilated, and that their religious sensibilities were awakened. But they were not *truly religious.* They still

were wanting in that which constitutes the essence of genuine piety. They still cherished the love of sin, and the prophet is commanded to "cry aloud, and spare not," while he charges their wickedness home upon them.

The case of *Herod* may also be noticed as somewhat remarkable. He "feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and a holy." He also took pleasure in listening to his messages of truth, and "did many things" which John pointed out as religiously right. Nevertheless he was a sinner of the most abandoned character, and soon added to his other crimes that of *murdering* the very man whom, as a religious teacher, he reverenced and on whose words of soberness he hung with gladness.

But perhaps the point on which we are dwelling is nowhere more lucidly illustrated than in the parable of the sower, as explained by our Lord himself. "He that receiveth seed in stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for awhile; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

Here is at least *one* class of hearers of the gospel (and perhaps *two*,) who received it with joy—whose religious emotions and activities are aroused by its presentation. But the root of the matter is not in them, and their essential deficiency is discovered, if they fall into "tribulation or persecution"—into circumstances adapted to test the genuineness of their principles and the strength of their religious devotedness.

What we thus learn from the Holy Scriptures is frequently corroborated by what falls under our own observation. We behold those who are much interested in the truths of the gospel; who forsake their sins to a great extent, for a time; who apparently conform to the Divine requirements, display much religious zeal, and seem to possess much feeling and to have much religious enjoyment. Yet the *result* proves that they have never experienced the renewing of the Holy Ghost; and when their defection takes place, so much have their religious exercises and activities resembled those of the truly pious, some of us are in doubt whether the genuine children of God have not fallen; while there are those who are ready to affirm the fact.*

These things are sufficient to convince us that there is, even in fallen human nature, *a susceptibility to religious impressions;* that the unregenerate are capable of exercising religious feelings, and putting forth acts of devotion. Indeed, we behold proofs of the fact in the religious emotions and deeds of the barbarous, the pagan and the Mohammedan, as well as of the nominally

* The Arminians.

Christian world. It is seen in the life-long fanaticisms of some devotees of heathenism; and equally as well in the short-lived enthusiasm of some who hear, yet do not permanently profit by the gospel.

II. *Let us inquire how these religious feelings and activities are awakened in the unregenerate.*

1. *In some they may be the result of Education.*

Education can produce this effect only on minds naturally of mystical tendency, and such may be trained to it amid the fables of heathenism, and the truths of Christianity.

From time immemorial there have been those among the idolatrous religionists of India who have practiced methods for bringing the mind into a state of high religious feeling, and even of rapture. For this purpose they observed silence, tranquility, solitude, and contemplation, as the prime conditions of success. To these they added bodily mortifications and exhaustions by means of fasting, denying all the appetites, maintaining a fixed position, and by endeavoring thus to give the soul the complete superiority and control over the body.

From the East these practices were probably introduced among those who professed Christianity in the early ages of the Church; and substantially the same methods were pursued, with substantially the same results. It would be difficult to decide which were the most successful, the disciples of Brahma, or those who called themselves by the name of Christ. Both practiced a rigorous asceticism; and when bodily privations and exhaustions had, in a manner, overcome the mind's balance, so that a partial insanity was produced, both reached high degrees of rapture, and were, alike, considered saints.

Now there are minds, naturally grave and austere, yet capable of high-wrought feelings and fond of retiring within themselves, which, when educated amid the corresponding influences, are easily and deeply affected, and display strong tendencies to mysticism. If the gloomy, the dreamy, and the austere, rather than the cheerful, the practical, and the social features of religion are presented to them; if they are trained to silence, meditation, and reverie, to practice self-mortifications and think transcendentally; they will probably be gradually moulded into the form of religion of which we are speaking. They will in time be admitted to the experience of its raptures, or its mental and moral quietude, whether they are educated to believe in the *Shasters* or the *Bible*.

2. *In persons of somewhat excitable temperament, religious feelings and activities may be awakened by stirring appeals to the passions.*

There are those whose temperaments are nervous, whose sympathies are easily enkindled, over whom the tones of the human voice, modified by the passions, and employed by an ardent, enthusiastic speaker, have a tremendous power. If the intellect of such persons is well cultivated, well disciplined, and well

informed, they are more under the influence of reason, they have more self-control, and are not so easily moved by extraneous influences. But without this culture, they are lacking in balance, their nerves and sympathies have the preponderance, and they are easily moved and moulded. If a subject—no matter whether true or not, so that it be novel in fact or form, and so that it meets the condition of their understanding, or commends itself to their sympathies—if such a subject be presented with exciting forms of address, if it be strongly put, defended by bold and sweeping denunciations, and urged in appeals to the passions, these minds will be the first to feel the enchantment and to be carried away.

So true are these remarks, that, if you are well acquainted with the peculiar temperament and intellectual idiosyncrasies of the several inhabitants of a neighborhood, you can point out, with much ease and certainty, the particular persons who will be the first to adopt a new notion, to be entrapped by an extravagance, to take the lead in an exciting measure.

Now, these are the very ones who are liable to have devotional feelings awakened, and to be aroused to an apparent religious activity by the mere force of exciting circumstances. When the minds of many are deeply interested in religious subjects, as is the case in revivals; when powerful influences are brought to bear upon them, as in protracted and camp-meetings; or when a persuasive orator is urging the claims of truth, or even of falsehood, such minds are deeply moved; and without stopping to look at principles, and fulfill the prime conditions of acceptance with God, they are ready to regard their excited feelings as the genuine affections of religion, and conclude that they have experienced the renewing of the Spirit—that they are the children of God.

3. *The religious sensibilities are awakened, in still another class, by appeals to the senses.*

Those of whom we now speak are, from want of intellectual and moral culture, not accustomed to find any impulses to moral action within. They are mainly influenced by others on whom they lean as guides, or are moulded entirely by the circumstances in which they live. They are, for the most part, passive recipients of outward impressions.

If pagans, they are deeply affected by the mysterious rites of their religion. The solemn stillness of the idol-temple, the presence of the gods whom from childhood he has been taught to regard with feelings of reverence and of terror, the smoke of incense and of burnt-offerings curling to the temple's vaulted roof, the prayers and incantations of priestly worshippers—all these meet his eye and ear and affect his heart. Thus the feelings of the idolater are fired, and the superstitions of his soul aroused, till he worships with as much devoutness and strength of emotion as a human being is capable of knowing.

If he be a Mohammedan, his mind is filled with the legends of the Moslem faith. Demons, good and bad, are supposed to be in every place and thing, so that he dares not let down a bucket in a well,* or pour water on the ground, or light a fire, or throw down a stick of wood, without asking permission of the spirits that may chance to be there. In this way, something meets his eye or ear on every occasion; some form of prayer or some charm must be resorted to, as a defence from these numerous demons, by which means his superstitious beliefs are kept alive, and his soul is perpetually strung to an enthusiastic pitch of devotion.

In these circumstances, the main solemnities of his religion produce a wonderful effect on him. When the voice of the muezzin, pealing from the lofty minaret, announces the hour of prayer, the Moslem is ready to obey the summons, and worships with much apparent, and probably much actual, religious feeling. Or when he enters the mosque—with slippers laid aside, because he treads on holy ground—and engages in the solemn rites of worship there conducted, his reverence for the holy place, his awe of the Being there worshipped, his multiplied superstitions, and the excitements of the occasion, all conspire to excite his devotional feelings to an intense degree of fervor, and frequently produce an actual frenzy.

Analagous effects are sometimes produced on the nominal Christian in much the same manner. One who is somewhat ignorant and disposed to be superstitious, and who is thus susceptible to impressions from appeals to the senses, enters an old or stately cathedral. The light, mellowed in passing through stained and painted windows, falls richly on the broad and pillared aisles. Paintings, descriptive of well-known Scripture facts, hang on the sacred walls. Music in its most effective form—the grand and stately harmonies of the old masters, bearing on their wings the deeply religious sentiments of the mass and anthem—floats in the lofty arches and fills the soul. Tapers are burning before the distant altar. Clouds of incense rise from censers swung by youthful hands, and the robed priest bends before the symbols of his faith, chanting the ancient services of his Church, or waiting the response from the uplifted voices of the choir. The wants of the senses are thus fully met. The immagination is excited. The heart is deeply moved. The religious sensibilities are awakened; and the devotee bends in adoration of the passing Host, overwhelmed with the depth and strength of his emotions, while, *from the character of his feelings*, he judges himself a true and acceptable worshipper of the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity.

4. *Devotional feelings frequently result from, or are connected with, the exercise of taste and the poetical faculties generally.*

Those who delight in the union of *art* with religion, who are

* See Lane's Mod. Egyptians, vol. 1, p. 337.

fond of architectural display, whose imagination is excited by the idea of antiquity and the recollection of old historic incidents in connection with the mysteries and poetries of religion, who admire the order and uniformity, while they are pleased with the splendors, of a ritual worship—such are frequently the subjects of intense devotional feelings as, in some grand and lofty fane, they engage in the solemn rites of religion, meditate on its sacred themes, and yield themselves up to the influence of the holy place and hour. Commencing with a dreamy, poetical devoutness, that may frequently be found in the regions of taste, they in many instances reach a state of high-wrought feeling that even converted men, of more matter-of-fact cast of mind, never experience.

Again, one who is by nature gifted with a lively perception of congruity, fitness, symmetry, beauty, and sublimity in art and in nature, can hardly be a *consistent* Atheist. He may be an immoral man, a neglecter of religious duty, and may even assert his disbelief of the Divine existence; yet when he views these things as matters of taste and cultivation, he can no more think with pleasure of the universe without a God than he can regard a human statue with a serpent's head, or without a head, as a finished piece of sculpture; he can no more be satisfied with his own neglect of the moralities and devotional sentiments of religion than he could admire a piece of landscape painting from which some main elements of the beautiful were omitted, or into which some monstrous and incongruous things were introduced.

Consequently, we find some of the most unbelieving and dissipated of the poets uttering some of the most deeply religious sentiments of the believing heart.

Shelley, for example, who with his almost unequaled poetical gifts united some of the most revolting principles of unbelief could both acknowledge a God and delight in the evidences of his presence, when the exercise of his taste had drawn him aside from his skepticism. The following lines will show the operation of his mind on such occasions:—

> "The Spirit whom I loved in solitude
> Sustained his child; the tempest-shaken wood,
> The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night—
> These were his voice: and well I understood
> His smile divine; when the calm sea was bright
> With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight."*

In similar circumstances, *Thomas Moore*, who, from the loose *morale* of his writings, has been aptly styled "the Irish Anacreon," could pen some of the finest, and even some of the most devotional hymns in the language. The pious muse of Cowper himself could not have expressed his recognition of, and confidence in God with more aptness and beauty than in the following by Moore:—

* See revolt of Islam, Canto I., 45.

"There's nothing bright above, below,
From flowers that bloom to stars that glow,
But in its light my soul can see
Some feature of Thy Deity.
There's nothing dark below, above,
But in its gloom I trace Thy love,
And meekly wait the moment when
Thy touch shall turn all bright again."

Notwithstanding the dissipated habits of Robert Burns, and the opposite current of his thoughts for the most part, there were moments when his poetical inspiration was united with a high degree of devotional feeling. Time will not permit us to quote examples illustrative of the fact. We simply give four lines, in which the sentiment of submission to the Divine will is expressed in a manner never excelled by one not inspired by the Spirit of God:—

"Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfill,
Here firm I rest; they must be best,
Because they are Thy will."

Those who are accustomed to the work of composition know that sentiments cannot be expressed in this manner without some corresponding feeling on the part of the writer. They are frequently reproduced, moreover, in those who *read*, and especially those who *sing* them. Indeed, they cannot be *correctly* rendered, either by the reader or singer, till the appropriate feelings are enkindled in his soul; and we are disposed to think that the unconverted members of church choirs are often the subjects of strong religious feelings when engaged in singing the praises of God. Both the sentiments and the music, if well adapted to each other, conspire to produce this effect; and possibly many such regard the feelings thus awakened as undoubted evidence of their own good religious estate, believing themselves actual possessors of true piety.

III. *In the third place, we propose to show in what respects the religious feelings and activities of the unregenerate differ from those of the genuine disciple of Christ.*

1. *They differ in their causes and objects.*

All genuine and acceptable devotion is a result of the Holy Spirit's influence on the soul. It is inseparably connected with penitence for sin, (in those who have sinned,) and with an affectionate confidence in Him who is reverenced and feared. It is the appeal of a soul that knows its entire unworthiness, and feels its dependence on Christ alone for pardon and acceptance with God. It is the grateful offering of a heart that is filled with a sweet sense of forgiveness—that, being justified by faith, has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is an expression of the soul's admiration of the perfectness of Jehovah, and its reverence for his great and holy name. It is based on an intelligent view of the Divine character and attributes in their just

relations to the universe, and especially to the creature who bows in worship. It must, therefore, and does, regard the Most High as its supreme object of complaisance and delight. It looks to Him as the sum of all goodness and the source of all hope, with appeals for the supply of the soul's necessities and the fulfillment of its holy desires. It is the communion of an affectionate child with a tender parent, of a penitent prodigal with a forgiving father, of a redeemed sinner with his reconciled God and Saviour.

But little of all this is discoverable in the devotional feelings of the unregenerate. There is not the least evidence, in their nature and modes of manifestation, that they are produced by the influence of the Holy Ghost. They are awakened in the soul in a way that excludes the necessity of supposing a supernatural cause. They result from the employment of methods that might be equally successful if there were no Holy Spirit, no God in the universe. They are not necessarily connected with intelligent views of the Divine character. Most of the essential attributes of Jehovah (such, e. g., as his justice and his holiness) may be unknown or denied; and his relations to the universe, and especially to mankind, as expressed in Christ the Mediator, the crucified Redeemer, the risen Saviour, the reigning God, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," may be entirely left out of view. There may be in them an acknowledgment of personal unworthiness, yea, even a deep sense of sin; but there is no adequate conception of the evil nature of sin, of the impossibility of its being cancelled by creature merits, of the necessity of Christ's sacrifice to its remission.

There is in them, consequently, none of the faith that reconciles the soul to God through the Mediator; none of the gratitude of a soul that feels itself plucked from destruction by a Redeemer's merits; none of the affection for Christ that is cherished by one who relies on his bleeding mercy, and perceives his infinite excellency.

There is in the devotional feelings we have been contemplating none of that intense desire for forgiveness that is felt where the direful consequences of sin are perceived; or if forgiveness is sought, there is none of that longing after *holiness*, that "hungering and thirsting after righteousness" in the life here, and as a preparation for heavenly fellowship and duty, which is manifestly an essential element of all true and acceptable devotion. Indeed, so far from thinking of the absolute necessity of holiness as a preparation for duty on earth and enjoyment in heaven, this devotion of the unrenewed soul may not admit the idea of its necessity as a preparation for duty here; it may not rise so high as to contemplate an eternal existence of holiness, and happiness as a consequence of the holiness; but may expend itself in contemplating

the immediate circumstances and accessories of devotion, and in cultivating and exercising the feelings they produce.

2. *Brief continuance is another usual characteristic of the religious feelings of the unregenerate.*

We have seen that genuine devotional feeling is produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit; and while it contemplates Divine excellence in contrast with personal unworthiness, it is the grateful expression of the soul's affection for its Redeemer, and its admiration of his infinitely perfect character. It therefore rises to God by affinity and continuously, as the starting germ rises to the light. It may receive aid from the circumstances and accessories of worship, as the germ by fertilizing substances in the soil. But it does not depend on these alone. Like the germ the soul has been quickened by the Almighty. There is in it a vital force that perpetually struggles for greater development, and thus seeks to keep the soul in communion with God.

It is not so with those who are unrenewed in heart. There is nothing in their moral affections to prepare them for spiritual worship and impel them to it. There is no affinity between the moral condition of their souls and the holiness of the high and lofty One, that draws out their feelings and aspirations toward him by perpetual attraction. Devotion is not a normal action of the soul; religious feeling is not a normal feeling. It is therefore brief in duration. It is an affair of seasons, a product of circumstances; it is an exception, rather than the general law of the mind. It continues only while the poetical afflatus is on the soul, while the imagination is in lively exercise, while the mind is acted upon by excited nerves; or it rises only where the taste is gratified by the forms and circumstances of worship, where the sacred associations and influences of the house of God disturb the usual condition of the soul, and induce thoughts and feelings which are not congenial to its general state and tastes, to which at other times it is a stranger.

For, as these outward circumstances are not permanent, and the mind cannot be under their influence *all the time*, its apparent religiousness will disappear with them. When the claims of business begin to press, when the cares of the world again fill the mind, when the desire of riches and the pride of life spring up in the heart, when temptations assail the soul, and the appetites and passions gather force, then this "goodness" which was caused by the Spirit of God, which did not commence with repentance and faith, and which did not lean upon a crucified Saviour for its sustenance, *passes away* "like the morning cloud and as the early dew."

3. *Its ineffectiveness is another characteristic in which it specially differs from genuine religious feeling.*

Genuine religion is a "power," a vital force in the soul. It leads and it enables its possessor to "overcome the world." It

strengthens the soul against temptation, and tends to eradicate sin and the love of sinning from the heart.

It is a strong affection, a divine and holy love. It casts out fear from the mind and fills it with admiration of Christ, while it impels to the imitation of his character, and awakens an ardent desire for his approbation in all things. It begets a holy confidence in God and rejoices in hope. In the exercise of this confidence and hope, the believer denies himself and presses on in the path of duty and holiness, exclaiming, "Now we are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*"

It is not forgetful of man, while it believes and hopes in God. It seeks the good of its neighbor, and is full of active efforts on his behalf.

It is thus a *positive principle*, as well as a devotional feeling, and manifests its power in all the relations of being.

But the religious and devotional feeling of the unregenerate is the opposite of all this. It is not a "power" in the same sense; it is not a vital principle; it is not an abiding and strong affection of the soul for God and man. It is for the most part but a *negative* principle, evaporating in poetical effusions, or exhausting itself in the overwhelming excitements of an occasion. Its subject may worship and adore the Deity of his own imagination; he may venerate the temples, times, and forms in which that Deity is worshipped; he may receive the truth with a transitory joy, and form hasty resolves to follow its instructions; but his joy is transient as the early dew, his resolutions of amendment are fruitless as the morning cloud. Selfishness still remains the controlling power of the soul; worldliness appears unchecked in all the hopes and conduct of life; the love of sin, like an evil spirit, takes possession of its swept and garnished home in the heart, and reigns without a rival as soon as the hour and forms of devotion are ended.

These remarks are applicable to most cases. Yet there are instances among Hindoo and Mohammedan devotees, as well as among enthusiasts of nominal Christendom, where the religious sensibilities are thoroughly awakened, and religious feeling assumes a permanent type, while, notwithstanding, there is nothing of genuine religion in its inception, middle, or end. In some instances it runs into fanaticism, and is in fact a species of insanity; in others it cools down into bigotry and formalism. In the one case it exhausts itself in feeding and watching the flame of its own feelings; and in the other, thinks more of the scaffolding and adornments of religion, than it does of the main edifice.

Its spuriousness may be seen in the fact that it has necessarily no connection with the peculiar and distinguishing truths of the gospel; not an inkling of the purity, charity, and holiness it requires; not the faintest resemblance to the spirit and character

of genuine piety. It may be possessed by the nominal Christian who never raises a thought above the rosary, the picture, the image, the genuflexions, and other concomitants of devotion; and by the Mohammedan dervish whom it drives to feats of fanaticism almost superhuman, while of the actual virtue of religion he is, and is content to be, profoundly ignorant. It appears in the Hindoo ascetic, who, blinded by the myths of his religion, fails to catch one glimpse even of the God of *Nature;* and in the *savage barbarian*, whose mind is imbruted, whose soul and body both are degraded by his most cruel and bestial modes of life. And, what should be noticed, *it is essentially the same thing in all.* It commences in much the same manner; its developments are extremely similar in their effects on the character and life. Change a few of the forms and names, and let all speak the same language, and it would be impossible to tell, from the spirit and temper and general characteristics of this fanatical and formal type of religion, whether its subjects are Mohammedans or barbarians, Hindoos or nominal Christians.

It therefore fails to meet the approval of Him who made man for religion, but who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who seeketh such to worship him as will worship him in spirit and in truth.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

1. *We learn from this subject, that those who would abolish religion do violence to human nature.*

There are those, even in Christendom—and their name is Legion—who would be pleased could they see Christianity dying out; and there are multitudes, in high places and in low, who do what they can by precept and example to destroy confidence in the Bible, and to banish religion from among mankind.

I need not stop now to show that the religion of the Bible is the highest form of religion in the world; that the effect of Christianity on the character and destinies of individuals and nations is peculiar, singular, and sufficient to declare its divine origin. But I would call attention to this one fact, viz.: that *man's nature and faculties adapt him to religion, and render it a necessity;* just as they also adapt him to *society*, and render it a necessity; just as they adapt him to *physical exertion* and render that a necessity.

Consequently, *a religion of some kind mankind must have*, WILL HAVE. As well endeavor to separate all the individuals of the race, and have them dwell apart and in silence, like the trees of an orchard, as endeavor to have them live without religion.

"But," we may be asked, "have not individuals lived without religion?"

Yes, we reply; and some have also lived without society, some without activity. If there have been atheists in the world

who have done violence to their nature and lived entirely without religion, so there have been hermits who have done violence to their nature and lived without human society; so there have been drones who have done violence to their nature and lived without bodily exertion.

But neither of these classes could be followed by the rest of mankind. Each in its way is a kind of monstrosity, on whose abuse of natural powers and impulses men necessarily look with disapprobation.

The one would be just as *worthlly employed* as the other in endeavors to introduce a universal imitation of its example; and one would be *just as likely to succeed* as another. Not until God changes man's nature, physical or social, or moral, can the physical energies of the race be suppressed, or the social habits of mankind be abolished, or religion be driven from the face of the earth.

2. *We know how to account for the many different religions that are found among men.*

The fact that there are many religions in the world—Pagan, Mohammedan, and Christian—has professedly been a great stumbling block in the way of some, and is urged as a reason for discarding religion altogether. But nothingcould be weaker than such reasoning, and nothing more wicked than to employ it on such a subject. No one ever dreamed, except in respect to *religion*, that the existence of counterfeits was a proof of the non-existence of any thing genuine to be counterfeited; or that several bad things, or beings of a certain class, afforded sufficient reason for believing that there could be no good think or being of that same class. Men act thus foolishly only on that particular point where it is the most dangerous for themselves.

But (to return) it is easy to account for the prevalence of these false systems of religion. Mankind must have a religion *of some kind*, just as they must have society, or food, or exercise. And when the true system is rejected; when the moralities required by the true and living God are abjured; when the fear of the Most High, and, eventually, the knowledge of Him are cast off; then conscience takes a speedy revenge; then their abused moral nature drives them to believe in fictitious gods; to worship the powers of nature; to fear a deity or demon in almost every place and thing; to observe the most degrading superstitions; to practise the most cruel, obscene and revolting rites; in the expressive language of Holy Writ, to "change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." As a consequence, they become the slaves of evil desires and the victims of the most disgusting vices.

This is the explanation of the prevalence of various systems of false religions on the earth. *A religion, men must have.* And

the same inexorable law of their nature that forced the heathen nations, when they had rejected God and his truth, into the worship of imaginary deities, and the belief of the most absurd religious fictions, drove the atheists of France to adore the goddess of Reason, and drives the rejectors of Revelation of our own day to swallow some of the most ridiculous superstitions, even down to the "spiritual communications" of the "knocking" demons, and the pantological revelations of the Poughkeepsie Seer!

3. *We learn why the doctrine of total depravity is frequently denied.*

Many there are who experience this stir of the emotions, this awakening of the religious sensibilities, of which we have been speaking, who mistake these feelings for the possession of true religious affections. And when they compare this, their experience, with what they suppose to be taught, or implied, in the doctrine of total depravity, they think they perceive its incorrectness beyond a doubt.

Now, it is not to be denied that a mistake has been made on the part of some who have given such a representation of the depravity of man's religious nature as to affirm its complete eradication or annihilation. They have thus left the impression on the minds of those whom they have sought to instruct, that there could be no religious action till there should be *a creation of new faculties.*

Such a doctrine is, we think, disproved by facts that lie spread all over the history of the race. Men do have religious sensibility, and do put forth religious activities, when, at the same time, they have not experienced the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And there is no wonder that when they compare these facts with such a representation of the doctrine of depravity, they are led to ignore it.

The true doctrine of depravity, we suppose, may be stated somewhat as follows: The faculties of man's religious nature are perverted from a right state and use to a wrong state and use, so that mankind in their unregenerate condition are entirely destitute of holiness and true religious goodness. Regeneration, instead of being an act of literal *creation*, is one of *renewing*, in which faculties already existent are brought into a right state and use. This is only accomplished by the Holy Ghost. Till it takes place there are no religious affections, and all the intense religious feelings which agitate the bosom of the unconverted, whether in Christian or in heathen lands, whether in Christian or in heathen worship, is a "goodness" of which the Almighty cannot approve. "It is like the morning cloud, and like the early dew it goeth away."

4. *We learn why there are so many self-deceived professors.*

That there are many in the Church whose lives are entirely

fruitless, who give no indications of piety except what are displayed in feelings possessed while engaged in worship, especially public worship, and in their profession, is not doubted, and cannot be disputed. Yet perhaps they honestly suppose themselves Christians. What is the explanation?

We suppose it may be found in our subject. They have had their religious sensibilities awakened and supposed themselves converted, perhaps from the fact that the keenness of these sensibilities after awhile became blunted. Yet they are frequently moved under the sound of the preacher's voice, or amid the ceremonies of worship; and this stir of the emotions is mistaken for the true experience of the Christian soul, although they themselves are quite aware that their lives do not exhibit the fair and full fruits of genuine piety, and do not afford satisfactory evidence of genuine Christian discipleship.

Nevertheless, as they cannot explain the devotional phenomena, of which they are subjects, in any other manner, they conclude themselves Christians, though professedly faulty ones.

In this way multitudes are deceiving themselves by mistaking the devotional feelings of the soul, when its religious sensibilities are temporarily awakened by natural causes, for the genuine exercises of the Christian soul.

Now it must be admitted that these persons are in imminent danger. For the very means of grace which are blessed to the salvation of others are very likely to produce a contrary effect on themselves. For example, when others draw near to God in the sanctuary, they are reminded of their sinfulness, and caused to feel their exceeding vileness in view of his infinite holiness. But these fail to perceive their own true character, and absolute need of spiritual renewing and of pardon, in their contemplations, in their enjoyment of the forms and accessories of worship, and in the devotional feelings awakened by them. When the Law utters its thunders in the ears of others, it awakens them from their security, and when the salvation of Christ is offered they are ready to flee to it as a refuge. But these are troubled with no apprehensions. They could even advance and touch the very mountain that trembled at the presence of Jehovah; since, while they know too little of themselves to feel their sinfulness, the scene would be adapted to increase those religious feelings on which their reliance is placed, and which they make the occasion of their self-deception.

5. *We learn why so many religious impressions, received under the presentation of the gospel, pass away without permanent and saving effect.* We have reason to believe that the gospel is never properly presented from the sacred desk without producing much feeling in many hearers. They are made serious and

thoughtful. They are deeply impressed with a sense of personal demerits, and their need of a Saviour.

But instead of complying with the gospel call forthwith, instead of seeking the pardon of sin by repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, there are multitudes, who, on finding themselves the subjects of these religious feelings, are disposed on this account to take some credit to themselves. They think that all *religious* emotions must have in them something good and praiseworthy, and persuade themselves that, if they are not already accepted of God, they have but to continue in the same direction and these feelings will ripen into genuine piety.

Thus the true effect of the gospel is evaded. There is no closing in with the offers of mercy. There is no yielding to the influence of the Holy spirit. There is no renewing of the heart. The mind, though thoughtful, is still full of worldliness and vanity. The eyes, though tearful, are still gazing on the pride of life. The heart, though overwhelmed with emotion, is still in the bond of iniquity. The soul, though complaisant, is still in bondage of fear. Its religious impressions are but ripples on the surface of the stream. The imaginary "goodness" that is nourished by them is like the morning cloud. While its possessor is flattering himself as to his prospects for eternity, his offended Maker is exclaiming, "What shall I do unto thee?" and the arm of his justice is ready to fall. But methinks one of this class of hearers inquires, "What shall I do?"

I reply, you must break away from the habits of remaining passive under religious impressions. You must also cease to think of any "goodness" of your own. You must admit your lost condition as a sinner. You must repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must beware of grieving the Holy Ghost.

Arise, then, my hearer, call upon thy God. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER

No. 12, Vol. XXV.] DECEMBER, 1851. [Whole No. 300.

SERMON DLXI.*

BY REV. A. J. FENNEL,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, GLENN'S FALLS, NEW-JERSEY.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

The subject assigned me for discourse on the present occasion is "*The Scriptural doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.*"

It is hardly fit, therefore, to take any single passage as a text. My work is prescribed. It is simply to gather up from the open Bible the doctrine in question, and to offer it to you, as near as I can, just as it comes from God.

I am not to cast the doctrine in the moulds of any denominational creed, nor to take it out of any of those moulds already run to my hand.

I shall not, therefore, at this place, even attempt to define the doctrine. If I can succeed in grasping it, and in holding it up before you, a sight of it will afford the best knowledge of what it is.

It will be admitted that there have been, and that there now are in the world, the righteous and the wicked, the regenerated and the unregenerated, the justified by faith in Jesus Christ and those whose iniquity remaineth. To one of these two great classes every man belongs.

One of the questions which we naturally raise as we read the Bible, one of deep interest, and one which we now raise, is, "*Can the truly righteous, the regenerated man utterly fall away from his righteousness, become again unregenerate, and be lost ?*"

1. Is there any thing in the nature of holiness which renders this fall impossible ? Clearly not ; for the Scriptures teach us

* Preached in Troy, N. Y., Oct. 15th, 1851,—before the Synod of Albany, and published by its request.

that both holy angels and holy man, the prime father of our race, have fallen. *Mere* holiness, then, does not make utter apostacy impossible.

2. Is there anything in the nature of regeneration which renders falling away impossible? This depends upon what its nature is. If it be a physical change, and holiness depends upon it as upon a physical cause, then we might infer that falling away could no more occur than that the sun can cease to shine. *All* sin, we should infer, would be impossible. And the passage in the 1st Epistle of John—"Whosoever is born of God . . . . cannot sin, because he is born of God"—we should interpret as stating an absolute impossibility.

But this view is disproved by both Scripture and fact. The Scriptures allow that real Christians do sin, and facts prove that they do. The Scriptures and facts teach likewise that they are strongly disposed to holiness, and that, the old man having been crucified, they do not live in any known habit of sin. But the impossibility of their thus living is only parallel to that under which the Lord Jesus "could do no mighty works in Nazareth, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folks and healed them." Shall we say, "Weak Redeemer, his power and skill must have been very limited!" Hush, lest we blaspheme! He had all power both in heaven and in earth.

But the change which is called regeneration is purely and solely *moral*. All the constitutional faculties of the soul are the same after as before the new birth. None have been taken away, none added. There is nothing, therefore, in the nature of regeneration which takes away the power of apostacy. Nay, as the change is not complete, there being produced but an imperfect holiness, and there being left remains of unsanctified affections, the regenerate person not yet glorified, in himself considered, is in far greater danger of apostacy than were the angels before their fall, than was Adam before his.

There being nothing, then, in the nature of holiness, nothing in the nature of the change in which holiness takes its origin, that renders it impossible for a righteous man to utterly apostatize, I now remark,

3. The Scriptures every where seem to assume man's freedom, and to go on the admission, as a fact, that the righteous man carries with him the power, and hence lives under the possibility of apostacy.

In the book of Ezekiel, this admission occurs frequently: "When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, ... he shall die in his sin; and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered."—Ezekiel iii. 20. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to

all the abominations that a wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."—Ezekiel xviii. 24. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby."—Ezekiel xxxiii. 18. Very similar are the forms of expression in these three places, and very similar are their contexts.

The view cannot be maintained that the righteous spoken of in these passages were only *outwardly* or *apparently* so, and not *really*:

(1.) Because is is a forced construction. The simple reader who has no theory to subserve would never think that the really righteous are not here meant.

(2.) That they are the really righteous is evident, from the fact that they are contrasted with the wicked.

(3.) It is evident that they are the really righteous, because they are represented as *safe* if they maintain their righteousness; and in the same connection the wicked are spoken of as exposed to death because they have not righteousness—a righteousness which is not represented as in any way differing from that of those with whom they are contrasted.

And besides, what force or meaning would the passages have, if speaking only of a *seeming* righteousness? Why say, if a man turn from this he shall perish, when, if he cling to it, he shall as certainly perish? Neither, if he cling to it, is he the safer; nor, if he renounce it, is he in the greater danger. Both are alike ruinous, and alike fatal.

So did not the prophet attempt to heal the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly, saying, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace."—Jer. viii. 11. He can speak only of the truly righteous and the truly wicked. There is, according to the fixed ordination of Heaven, as a settled fact in the moral world, an indissoluble connection between righteousness and life, and between wickedness and death. To this the prophet would direct the eye of the watchman. And with the great truth burning in his own mind, he has an hypothesis for both characters: If the righteous man should become a wicked one,—or *when* such an event as this occurs, as it might, were he to use his own free powers in that direction,—his character will link him to ruin; and if the wicked man becomes righteous,—or *when* he becomes righteous,—his character will link him to life.* If they should exchange characters, they must exchange dooms.

*The wicked man never becomes righteous without special grace. In this all evangelical Christians agree. Considering him, then, in himself alone, *his* power of becoming holy is never used. Shall it be thought strange, then, that the power of the Christian to apostatise is never exercised when *he* has the special grace of God to prevent it?

Of the same hypothetical character, and on the same admission of the power of the Christian to apostatize, is the remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

That reference is here made to real Christians is evident:

(1.) From the undisputed design of the epistle in which the passage occurs.

This was to prevent apostacy—apostacy of those who were addressed; and that they were addressed as any other than as acknowledged Christians, as were the different churches to whom the other epistles were written, is an absurdity too naked to need any unmasking. It would make the churches then only bands of *seeming* Christians or of hypocrites, and confine *real* religion to the apostles themselves, or banish it from the world.

(2.) That reference is made in this passage to real Christians is evident from the language used. Though the description of character might *possibly* find application to some persons in Christian communities and in Christian churches, who know nothing of that "charity" without which, whatever else they may have, they are but "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal," mere "stony-ground" religionists; yet a plain man, with no theory to maintain, would hardly think that these were the persons meant. The Christian is clearly the only person of whom the description can be understood in its highest and best sense. Whatever may be true of any other person, *he* is enlightened, *he* tastes the heavenly gift, *he* is a partaker of the Holy Ghost, *he* tastes the good word of God, and *feels* the influence and the power of the world to come, as no unregenerate person does. The passage is both appropriate and comprehensive as a description of the true Christian.

And, besides, if they are not Christians whom the apostle means, how could he speak of renewing them *again* to repentance, and say that it is *impossible*, because they crucify the Son of God *afresh* or *again*?

(3.) That this passage relates to real Christians is evident from the aggravated character of the crime contemplated. If it should exist, it would be no ordinary offence. Vaulting up the whole gradation of human crime, it passes on, and takes its station beyond where repentance ever comes; there it stands, beyond the reach of infinite grace. As though its perpetrator had exhausted on his own person the provision made for his salvation, and had then sold its advantages, he is set forth a spiritual Esau,

his birthright of grace despised and lost, his tears of no avail to regain it!

Of the same character is the passage in the 10th chapter of this epistle: "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." If we Christians, with forethought of intention, apostatize, (that this is the sin spoken of, the context renders evident,) there is no other, no second Saviour provided for us; nothing remains for us but a fearful judgment and fiery doom.

Now, no one supposes that falling away from any common illumination of the gospel, any common participation of Christian benefits, any common influences of the Spirit, any common regard for the divine Word, any mere external governance of the life by the hopes and the fears of the coming world—in short, no one supposes that falling into absolute infidelity, from the very threshold of the heavenly kingdom, is attended with such hopelessness as that brought to view in these passages. The Scriptures, and Christian ministers, in fulfilling their commission, call upon the wicked, the abandoned, the errorist, the infidel, whatever may have been his past experience, to repent, to return to the Lord, who will have mercy, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon. But on what principle is this free and universal offer of life made to many in every Christian community, if these passages relate to sinners who have only trembled like Felix, washed their hands like Pilate, prayed and wondered like Simon the sorcerer?

In anticipation of what I have yet to say, I here remark that the fact of this universal offer of salvation, free and ample for all, proves that though the Christian, by the exercise of his powers, *might* fall away, he in fact never does; for if he did, then for his sin there would be no sacrifice, and fallen Christians would constitute a class in every community to whom the offer of life could not be made.

And now, I further remark that the promises and threatenings *generally*, which are addressed to Christians, allow the possibility of their apostacy. If the command which comes to the sinner to obey the gospel, implies that he possesses ability so to do, either natural or gracious, so do the warnings to Christian imply that *they* have ability to plunge into ruin. They are told that he that *endureth* to the end shall be saved; and that he that *overcometh* shall inherit all things. "Take heed, brethren," says the apostle, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,"

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints admits *fully* that Christians have free will; that they have ability to apostatize, and, in themselves considered, are in great danger of it. And hence the true doctrine *includes*, as one of its essential elements, the use and influence of promises, threatenings, and the various means which God has ordained to the work of preserving his saints.

I pass now to a second inquiry, more momentous than the one which we have been considering. Is the power to apostatize, fearful as it is, in itself considered, ever exercised; or, as a matter of fact, will every truly regenerated person so persevere in holiness as to be finally saved? Does God, who has the certain knowledge of all certain events, give us any answer to this question in the revelation of truth, so that *we* may have any certain knowledge on the subject? Or are we left with at least half as much uncertainty as to the salvation of the saint as of the sinner? And must every Christian; however certain he may be that he is now a child of God, be constantly agitated with the fear that he shall become a child of the Devil, and be lost? And must the joy of the heavenly host over the repenting sinner ever be clouded and chilled with the fear that he may yet be given up of his God, and lie down in hell?

The answer to this queston clearly must have an important practical influence; it has not a little to do with our hopes and our fears, our agitation and our tranquillity, as Christians not yet glorified. What, then, saith the Scriptures?

Far back in the comparatively dim light of the old dispensation it was proclaimed—"The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hands." "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

And when the Saviour came, and "spake as never man spake," what were his words? Did he annul the intimation of the ancient Scriptures, or did he cast upon it the clear light which he came to reveal, and raise it to a certainty? "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me *hath everlasting life*. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, *he shall live for ever*. . . . Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath everlasting life*." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation; but *is passed*

from death unto life." "*The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.*"

What can be clearer than these words of the Great Teacher? None that were given to him shall be lost. And the dividing line which he fixes between death and life is not drawn across the farther end of the believer's course, but across its beginning. In his first exercise of justifying faith, in his first partaking of the Redeemer's flesh and blood, in his new birth, he actually passes the line between death and life; henceforth, because He in whom his life is, lives, he shall live also. Not that he shall be compelled to go to heaven, whether he will or not. "My sheep," says the Great Shepherd, "*hear my voice*, and I know them, and *they follow me*: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, [those of whom I am to lose none,] is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." How perfectly do these words guard every sheep of the fold! These are the ones who are in the everlasting covenant, of whom God has declared, "I will not turn away from them to do them good;" not, if they are faithful, and turn not away from me; but "I *will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*" These are the elect, whom the Saviour declared it impossible for false Christs and false prophets, with all their signs and wonders, to deceive. These are they who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation; they whom God will not suffer to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but, in his wisdom, and by his power, will ever, in faithfulness, make a way for their escape.

And I now furtker remark, that this doctrine is not only clearly intimated in the Old Testament, and clearly taught by the Lord Jesus, but it is proclaimed and exulted in by the apostles. "And we *know*," says Paul, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose." How so? May they not by any enemy or instrumentality be deceived, ensnared, ruined? By no means. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. . . . Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here is a complete and heaven-wrought chain, linking those whom God foreknew to glory; and it is described as already finished in the purpose of Jehovah.

And it is not important to the doctrine in hand, let it be distinctly observed, which of the three main significations claimed for the word *foreknow*, is given to it. Give it the Arminian one, *prescience of repentance and faith;* or the mixed one, *loved or approved*, whether from a foresight of obedience or not; or give

it the sense *to select or determine upon*, the Calvinistic election of grace, and the chain in either case remains alike unbroken. Whom God knew would repent and believe, or whom he loved from a foresight of goodness or otherwise, or whom he selected of his own good will as the subjects of regeneration, *them* he predestinated to a conformity to the image of his Son, [to be holy. . . . Moreover, whom he did predestinate, [to be holy, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

And then, in view of this chain of grace, joining every true believer to glory, the fervid apostle kindles into exultation, and triumphantly exclaims, as if in defiance of all the enemies of the Church of God, "If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Perfectly confident was the apostle that He who began a good work in Christians would perform (finish) it; and that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance—not abandoned.

And how childish and short-sighted is the answer so often made to the above triumphant passage of the apostle, that this is all *conditional*; none of these things can separate a Christian from the love of God unless he *yields* to them? Indeed! and who ever supposed they could? Is there any other way for a Christian to fall than by yielding to evil? Does the objector think this passage means that no creature is stronger than God, and that all this triumphing of the apostle is a mere flourish of trumpets over the fact that no creature of earth or hell can make effectual war upon the Almighty, and tear away an obedient child from his arms? If this is not what he thinks, then he is entertaining himself with a mere truism, which, of course, *nobody* denies: nothing can ruin the child of God unless he yields. And this is the precise point to which the whole passage relates. As there is no other way to pluck a child from His hands but by inducing apostacy, it is over the want of power in all the enemies of the Christian to effect this that the apostle triumphs so exultingly. His assurance was, and ours is, that all the wisdom, wonders, temptations, lies, allurements, and enchantments of men and devils, cannot cause a Christian to apostatize from his God!

Another inquiry: Does the perseverance of the saints, thus revealed, thus promised, and hence sure, consist in simply retaining the grace and obedience possessed immediately on conver-

, or does it involve a progress and a growth? Is the Chris- stereotyped at the moment of the new birth? and does he s on through a life which is dead level, or does he grow and rel in a path which leads upward where the light is clearer, atmosphere purer—nearer heaven and nearer God?

To this question the Bible returns no unequivocal answer. It resents the life of the Christian as anything but stereotyped, l the on same plane with the point of his departure. Though sometimes falls into sin, and sometimes backslides from a nt to which he had previously attained, yet, on the whole, his ength increases, and his progress is upwards. Having clean nds, he grows stronger and stronger; and being just, his path neth more and more unto the perfect day.

In the New Testament, this feature of the saints' perseverance requently taught in the clearest form. The Christian is at first *abe in Christ*, from which he grows to *a perfect man in Christ*. s religious life is symbolized by the figure of a mustard-seed owing to a tree; of leaven leavening the whole lump; of grain the progress of growth: "first the blade, then the ear, after- rds the full corn in the ear."

The figure of a warfare, too, under which his life is represented, d in which he is the habitual victor, includes the idea of pro- ess; just as though he conquered one foe, and then passed on attack another; subdued one sin or evil passion, and then dressed his efforts to another; and so prosecuted his course, owing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, til he arrives home in glory.

Thus I have endeavored to educe from the Scriptures their ching on the subject of the perseverance of the saints. Though ssessing free will, and the power to apostatize, they will—for d promises that they shall—persevere in holiness— a holiness reasing, on the whole, to the end of life—and ultimately enter to glory.

What God knows will occur, and what he hence promises all occur, I now remark, he knows and promises as depending on foreseen agency or instrumentality. The saints' persever- ce has such a dependence as this. God foresees and appoints

Do the Scriptures teach us any thing in relation to this pendence?

Most clearly they do; and we turn for a moment to what may styled the saints' *preservation*. Though they persevere, it is virtue of their preservation. They are kept; they do not ep themselves alone: "Kept by the power of God through th unto salvation."

This power of God, it is evident from the nature of the case, not the same as that by which the worlds were made, and which the stars are kept in the heavens. It is the power

he has of securing the moral results which his benevolence demands; and it lies rather in his wisdom than in his natural attribute of strength. He is so wise that he is able to preserve all his saints; he is so wise that he has mighty power in securing to them the faith through which they are kept, and which links them indissolubly to life.

Without dwelling upon the atonement of Christ—a wonderful power of God to accomplish moral effects, and which is emphatically the offspring of his wisdom, and yet *in itself* alone relates to the sinner as much as to the saint—I would direct you to one of the agencies in which he preserves the saints; namely Christ's intercession. This he did for his disciples just before he suffered; and for all who, after them, should believe on him. And now since his ascension, as the apostle repeatedly declares, he ever appeareth in the presence of God, to make intercession for his people. To this agency has he been appointed, and in it he must continue to the end, when he will cease, delivering up the kingdom to the Father, and laying down all authority and power.

And, in connection with these intercessions, which God the Father ever hears, there is, with direct reference to the saint, the office-work of the Spirit, and the instrumentality of the truth: "Chosen unto salvation," he is said to be, "through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Dwelling in the children of God, the Holy Spirit *seals* them and gives them an *earnest* of their future inheritance, a part as a surety of what remaineth. And the *truth* is essential to the existence of faith—for how can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?—and of course essential to all the saving effects of faith on the life. The truth, as is evedient from every page of the sacred record, is a fit and indispensable instrumentality, by which not only to begin but to perpetuate holiness, to strengthen and sustain the soul in its onward sanctifying work and preparation for glory.

Thus it would seem that the *perseverance* of the saints, when viewed in its relation to the agencies and means by which it is effected—foreseen of God as they are, and appointed in his wisdom—might more appropriately be styled the saints' *preservation*. True it depends upon the free will, but more upon free grace; true, the saint perseveres, but he is kept by the power of God; he practises holiness, but only as he is drawn to it by the Holy Spirit. God is first in all the process, executing the demands of his own benevolence and glory.

I remark now,

1. The true doctrine of the perseverance of the saints makes the final salvation of the Christian *conditional*. It says, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved," and no others. It says that if the Christian should fall away, he would not only perish, but he could not be renewed again to repentance.

2. The true doctrine of the perseverance of the saints makes the final salvation of the Christian *certain*. It insures the performance of the condition upon which that salvation is based; it says that he shall hold on his way, and wax stronger and stronger. It puts into the mouth of the Church, in relation to all apostates, "They went out from us, because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." Christ says that he knows his sheep. This doctrine claims that at the last day he shall truly say to every opostate, with how many tongues soever he may have spoken; with whatever gifts of prophecy, of knowledge, or of faith, he may have been endowed; whatever goods he may have given to the poor; however clean he may have been washed from the pollutions of the world; how often soever he may have eaten and drunk at his table, "I *never* knew you; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

A conditional salvation, and a certain one, both harmonize in this doctrine, because the performance of the condition is certain also.

3. The true doctrine of the perseverance of the saints demands the diligent use of all the means of promoting the divine life. The Christian cannot say, "If I am to persevere, I shall persevere, let me do as I will." The doctrine is, that he wills to persevere; and to say that he will persevere, if he wills not to, is to deny the doctrine. The certainty of a thing by no means tends to relax effort for its attainment, especially when efforts are appointed and ordained to the end. What general ever doubted that his soldiers would fight more bravely, if he could inspire them with the assurance of victory? What teacher ever doubted that his pupils would be more diligent, if he could make them certain of getting their lessons? Paul did not allow the assurance he had of his own salvation to prevent his keeping his body under; he did not allow the pledge he had that he should see Rome, to prevent his seeking the protection of the Roman centurion, that he might not be put to death by the forty Jews who had bound themselves under a curse that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him. And when he was sailing to Rome, he did not allow the certainty, not only that his own life should be preserved from the perils of the deep, but also the lives of all those who sailed with him, and which certainty he had already proclaimed to them, to prevent his saying, when the seamen were preparing to leave the ship, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

Anything may be certain and yet conditional, the performance of the condition being certain also. And the certainty of the perseverance of the saints in a growing Christian life, involves their willingness, and watchfulness and prayer; their study of the Holy Scriptures, their crucifying the flesh, with its affections and

lusts. These, together with the Redeemer's intercessions and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, ever sustain their foreseen and appointed connection with the perseverance of the saints.

So the real tendency of this doctrine upon a mind rightly disposed is to prompt it to an undivided effort to realize the certainty foretold. As to the wicked and the self-deceived, they may abuse it to their injury and undoing, as they do even the long-suffering of God.

4. This doctrine claims that all true Christians have been given to Christ; that they were chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; that they compose a redeemed fold, gathered from all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, freely following the Great Shepherd; and that none of them shall be finally lost.

But did not Christ say to the Father, some one may reply, "Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition," implying that he had lost *one* who had been given him?

This passage is easily explained by a reference to similar ones, and to a prevalent principle of language: "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias," says Christ, "but to none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a woman that was a widow." That is, he was not sent to a widow in Israel, but to a widow in Sidon. And, "There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus, the prophet, but none of them were cleansed, save Naaman, the Syrian." That is, no Israelite was cleansed; but Naaman, the Syrian, was cleansed. So precisely in this passage: "None that thou gavest me is lost; but the son of perdition" is lost. The avaricious apostle, "a devil," the betrayer, chosen for wise reasons to be a witness to his works and his innocence, never a Christian—*he* is lost. He fell from the apostleship, that he "might go to his own place."

It is one of the principles of this doctrine, that the Church is sifted, at least in part, of her hypocrites, and unregenerated members, by the temptations, and trials, and heresies with which they are assailed. Not having root in themselves, as the Saviour teaches in the parable of the sower, they endure but for a while; the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and tribulation or persecution arising, they fall. And "there must be also," the apostle says, heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest."

This doctrine teaches that the true Christian will be kept from fatal heresy as well as fatal crime; and, according to it, the belief of doctrine which subvert the gospel, as decisively reveals an enemy of the cross, as does the practice of iniquity a man unwashed from his sins.

5. The true doctrine of the perseverance of the saints has

place in it for promises, warnings, and to exhortations to continuance in well doing. This should be ever held in remembrance by the religious teacher. It includes and demands the ministry and the ordinances of the Church. The Christian is to be trained up from a spiritual babe to a spiritual man. Every moment he carries with him ability to step aside and seal his ruin! Nay, if left to himself, he will certainly do it. In these instrumentalities and agencies, which are of God, is lodged a measure of the power by which he keeps his saints; and he sets them forth as ordained to the end. They *tend* to the Christian's preservation. The minister of Christ, having all confidence in the piety of his church, may address them, after the example of Paul, as "*holy brethren*" and "*partakers of the heavenly calling*;" and then point them to the Hebrews who rebelled in the wilderness, and fell short of the promised land; and solemnly warn them against sin, and exhort them to watchfulness, lest *they* fall in the way and come short of the promised rest. No doctrine of the perseverance of the saints inconsistent with this is of God.

Finally, I remark—This doctrine makes perseverance in an increasing holiness *an essential attribute of the Christian character*. He, therefore, in whom it is not found, whatever may have been his past experience or his present standing, can have no *certain* ground of belief that he is a member of the family of Christ. The backslider can have no such ground until he returns to his God, and sees himself living in a new and increasing obedience.

On the other hand, my brethren, of this doctrine this is the consolation: just so far as any one of you has the assurance that perseverance in an increasing holiness is an attribute of your character, just so far you may have the assurance of your own final salvation God has joined the two together. Weak as you are in yourselves, conscious as you may be of your own hearts instability, the subject of earth's and hell's machination, yet in God is your strength.. He knoweth how to deliver you. Though trembling and fearful you may make your way over the storm-field of earth, you shall not be tempted above what you are able to bear. You have already passed the line between death and life: here you are safe; hereafter you shall triumph.

SERMON DLXII.

BY REV. WM. T. HAMILTON, D.D., MOBILE, ALA

THE DYING THIEF;

OR, MARKS OF AN ACCEPTED FAITH.

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."—LUKE. XXIII 42.

How unexpected the sound, how impressive the utterance of these words, in the strange and exciting circumstances of the scene, as described by the Evangelists!

For two or three years Jerusalem had been filled with varying and contradictory rumours concerning the movements and the pretensions of one of obscure birth and mean condition; a person originally from Galilee, and who was known to have been long wandering up and down the country, having no fixed place of abode, but propagating every where his extravagant doctrines, and consorting, for the most part, with the dregs of the people. He had occasionally been seen in the capital city itself, and usually his footsteps had been followed by tumultuous crowds, whose vociferous acclamations had more than once proclaimed him a prophet, and hailed him even as the Son of David. Nay, some had been heard to assert, with great confidence, that this Galilean prophet had actually performed sundry miraculous cures on the sick, the impotent, the blind; and certain indistinct whisperings had penetrated even the highest circles in Jerusalem, about his having raised from the grave and restored to his afflicted relatives, somewhere about the suburbs of the holy city itself, a young man of respectable connections, who was known to have died, and to have lain buried for some time. But the populace are always credulous and superstitious both, and it is well known that rumour loses nothing by circulation.

Certain it was, however, that whatever the opinions of the vulgar might be the learned and the prominent men of the nation gave no credit to the pretensions of this would-be prophet.

On some charge connected with the claims involved in his assumed character, he had been arrested by order of the chief priests; he had been arrainged before the Sanhedrim, the great council of the nation; by them he had been handed over to the Roman governor, Pilate; after an open trial, he had been condemned to death; and at this very hour he was in the hands of the officers of justice, assigned to execution in company, as it was generally understood, with two other notorious criminals: nay, even now the execution was in progress.

Pass, then, at once to the busy, scene: it is but a short distance

m the city; and there, where the multitudes are congregated ound that slight eminence, the well-known Calvary, you have e whole before you.

On the spot so fitly designated *Golgotha*, the place of skulls, u may see, high above the heads of the populace, three outretched forms, each fast nailed to the horrible cross. The oman centurion, with his guard of soldiery, is at hand. There, o, you may note the high priest, with his numerous attendants; ere stand the Pharisees, scowling with undisguised hatred on m who hangs on the middle cross, the centre of interest to all r that is he whom the populace so lately hailed as the greatest prophets, whom now they denounce as an impious impostor, fit to live! Bitter taunts break from the ranks of the Jewish iests gazing near. "*He saved others; let him save himself, if he , as he pretended, God's chosen Messiah!*" The soldiers, too, ugh and unthinking, as is the wont of their class, throw out uel jeers: "*If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself!*"

Nay, the very thieves hanging at his side seem to catch the neral spirit of mockery; for one of them railed on him, saying, *If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us!*"

And is there no eye to pity, no heart to feel, no voice to utter nes of sympathy for one around whom, but a few hours ago, ousands were thronging with congratulation, with triumphant allelujahs, and with songs of praise? None! The priests emselves mock him; the soldiery jeer him; the fickle populace ag their heads in derision, and shoot out the lip; and outlawry nd crime itself affect to look down upon him as basest of the ase! Who, in such a scene, would venture to brave this unquivocal indication of public sentiment, by treating with even a adow of respect one thus openly proscribed and universally horred! Had you and I been there, our feelings would doubtss have fallen in with the popular current; our lips would ave curled with equal scorn, and possibly our voices would ave risen with biting mockery too.

But yet, amid this general torrent of insult, one voice, one soliary voice rises in another strain, and that too from a quarter hence it might perhaps be least expected. With the reckless ardihood of desperate villany, one of the suffering malefactors ad thrown insult in the teeth of the crucified Galilean prophet; ut the other culprit promptly and boldly reproved him: "*Dost ou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and e indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but is man hath done nothing amiss.*"

After this burst of honest indignation, he turned to the calumnited companion of their shame, and accosted him in the words of y text: "*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*"

Employed at such a time, and under such circumstances;

employed in addressing a person condemned and scorned; writhing though he was in nature's last agonies; taunted on all hands as a blasphemous imposter; spurned of men, and rejected, as it might seem, of Heaven itself; this one brief sentence not only evinces profound respect, but it is a monument unparalleled of faith; of true, genuine, saving faith in the Redeemer of mankind; of faith unsurpassed and unexampled. History presents nothing like it; earth has never seen its fellow. *It was* AN ACCEPTED FAITH: and, thief though he was, perishing though he was, even then, under the merited stroke of human justice, the dying Saviour, whom he was not ashamed to acknowledge as such, even beneath the heavy cloud of shame that then was obscuring his glory, pronounced the blessed assurance to him: "*This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*"

Here, then, we may discern the "*marks of an acceptable faith;*" and on the possession or the want of such a faith, your destiny and mine for eternity must depend.

1st. *True faith is self-condemnatory;* it is rooted and grounded in *sincere repentance.*

In the Word of God, Christ is presented to us as a Saviour of the lost. He offers pardon to the guilty.

It was for sinners undone by their transgressions that the Redeemer undertook to procure pardon and justification before God, and for such only.

If I *merit* not condemnation, I need no pardon; and until I discern distinctly and fully that I am guilty, and righteously condemned, I cannot *feel* my need of pardon; and not feeling my need of it, I cannot *desire* it. The thief hanging at the Saviour's side did feel his guilt; he acknowledged to his companion in guilt the perfect equity of the punishment he was enduring, even at the hands of his fellow-men; and, by plain implication, much more did he deserve punishment at the hands of God. This, his language both to his fellow-culprit and to the Saviour clearly implies. He makes no attempt to conceal, to justify, or to palliate his guilt. He acknowledges it distinctly and fully. "*We, indeed, justly.*" And thus, taking the entire blame on himself alone, he throws himself at once on the clemency of the suffering Messiah at his side. A similar heartfelt contrition, an unsparing self-condemnation, is the uniform attendant on a saving faith. "*He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*" "*If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*" But, "*whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper.*"

Let it, then, be distinctly understood and carefully remembered, that without this sincere and unaffected condemnation of himself, as deserving the fearful curse of God's law, there is and there can be in no man an acceptable faith in the Saviour, who alone delivers from the curse of the law. It is only when filled with a touching

sense of his personal unworthiness, that any man can urge aright the appeal of the dying thief: "*Lord, remember me.*"

2d. But his faith was also *unhesitating, full, and confiding.* Whatever may have been the process by which his mind had been led to the conclusion that the taunted sufferer hanging at his side was the long-expected Messiah of his nation, the hope of Israel, and the refuge of the guilty, no sooner, as it would seem, was that conclusion actually reached, than he acted upon it promptly and at once, and urged his appeal to Jesus, desperate though his case might appear. Condemned of men, condemned of God, and condemned by his own conscience, he probably felt that the shame and the torment he was then enduring were but the foretaste of deeper pangs and a darker doom awaiting him, when the law of man should have done its worst upon his body.

Human sympathy could no more avail him; Divine Justice frowned upon him. Beside him was one, covered indeed with obloquy, and loaded with shame, yet one whom he saw reason to regard as not only innocent of crime, but holy; a prophet of God, yea, the long-expected Messiah. The ancient prophets, he well knew, had in their day been rejected and killed; and perhaps even then some of the prophecies respecting the wounding and bruising of God's chosen servant, and those setting forth the taking away of sin by the sacrifice of himself, to be made by Messiah the Prince, recurred to his thoughts; and then, as he heard the unfeeling taunts and the base charges thrown out against the meek sufferer he beheld at his side, it may be that he recalled the rumours he had heard of devils cast out, of diseases removed, yea, of life restored to the dead by this very sufferer. It may be, even, that he had himself witnessed some of these manifestations of superhuman power and benignity on the part of this his fellow-sufferer, so immeasurably superior as he felt him to be above himself, in all moral qualities; and, as he thus mused him, and thus reflected, conviction gradually fastened on his mind, and moved his heart, and awakened even hope in his guilty bosom. Here, if any where in the wide universe of God, might lie the power to rescue even him from at least the second death; and with that conviction he turns, reproves his scoffing companion, acknowledges his own guilt, and then, to the suffering yet spotless victim suspended between them, at once he prefers his plea: "*Lord, remember me.*" There is no hesitancy, no circumlocution, no peradventure in his language or his movements. He sees his guilt; he feels his peril; he thinks that he discerns in Jesus evidence of power to help him; and at once and earnestly his suit is urged: "*Lord, remember me.*" No conditions are proposed, no terms offered; he throws his hopes on the mere mercy of him he styles Lord. All he asks is remembrance, notice, pity; just what his Lord, of his own spontaneous goodness, might be disposed to do for him.

And truly, this is the genuine temper of true faith. While only alarmed under conviction of sin, a man will attempt much, and do much, and promise more, in hope of obtaining favor with God; but when thoroughly humbled; when, really penitent, he begins to apprehend the true character, the all-sufficiency, and the matchless grace of Christ Jesus, as *the Saviour*, pre-eminently and alone, he then abandons all self-reliance; he throws aside every condition; he offers no terms; he simply and cordially submits to the good pleasure, the unrestricted disposal of God in Christ; and the language of his very heart is, "*Lord, remember me.*" If Christ, as the Saviour, as the Redeemer, will but remember *me*, a sinner, he will remember me *as* the Saviour, mighty to deliver, rich in grace, and not as an angry judge. "*Lord, remember me.*"

3d. But again: *His faith was frank and open.* There is a noble ingenuousness in this appeal of the dying thief, that is worthy of all admiration, and of all imitation too. He spake, not to one courted, admired, and applauded; it was not in the hour of the Galilean prophet's triumph, when the risen Lazarus was before him; when those who had long been lame, halt, crippled, paralytic, or lunatic, were gratefully proclaiming the power that had healed them; not when thousands miraculously fed by his hand were shouting his praise, and hailing him as the prophet foretold, the Son of David, Israel's long-promised Mesiah King! No, no, no! All that was past and gone. The dying thief spake to Jesus, the despised, calumniated, condemned Jesus, when hanging on the cross; when surronnded by a hooting crowd, mocked by the rude soldiery, and bitterly taunted by the priests and scribes of his nation. Nay, the very man thus hated, rejected, scorned, charged with blasphemy, and actually dying under the hands of the public executioner, this once guilty thief, but now right-minded and noble-hearted penitent, addressed in terms of profound respect, of reverence, nay, of adoration. He styles him Lord, solicits his favorable notice, and throws himself on his mercy. There is here discovered a matchless moral grandeur in this dying thief.

Unmoved by example, unawed by power, unaffected by ridicule, contempt or mockery, this boldest of believers judged for himself, and obeyed the impulse of his own conscience; and, while all the world rejected Jesus; while his very disciples were hiding in cowardly desertion; this poor, suffering criminal, this despised outlaw, this guilty, but now penitent thief, dared, alone and in defiance of Jews and Romans, of torturers and scoffers, to single out the very person on whom all others thus heaped contumely and insult, as the one whom his heart and his voice, solitary though it was, should hail in open acknowledgment, as *the great Prophet, the promised Messiah, the Lord of all, the one only hope of his guilty, his perishing soul:* "Lord, remember me."

Such is always the temper of a true faith. That religion which is avowed only when popularity attends it, and which shrinks and retires and hides its head when contempt and opposition assail it, is spurious and unsound! May not some who among us are ranked as Christians, find cause to blush, on a comparison with this poor, dying thief?

Some there are who would feel deeply affronted, should we question their veracity, their ingenuousness, their frankness; and yet in places and at times where religion was reputable and the Saviour honored, they avowed themselves the friends of religion and followers of the Saviour. But, on passing into scenes and moving in a society where the Saviour is contemned and his religion is in disrepute, they cast away the badge of discipleship, and strive to conceal every token of connection with Christ! Ah! how little, how fickle, how base the conduct of such, compared with the noble frankness of the guilty thief, addressing the Saviour, as he did, when surrounded by mocking thousands, "*Lord, remember me!*"

4th. Once more. His *faith was spiritual; it looked through and over all mere outward circumstances.*

It was in disregard of all outward appearances, in contempt of mere external circumstances, in defiance of all that met the senses, that the penitent thief acted and spoke. So far as the senses alone could report, there was nothing to inspire respect, nothing to awaken confidence or to infuse hope!

He himself was condemned, and dying as a criminal. By his side hung one in like condemnation, a criminal to all appearance; a base and impious impostor, said the popular voice. Thus his companion in suffering was *denounced by* the heads of the church, condemned of the magistrate, and suffering under the hands of the public executioner; the eyes of thousands were scowling at him; the popular cry was loud and clamorous against him; and to all appearance he was a guilty man, suffering but as his crimes deserved.

But all this biased not the judgment of the poor thief. Whence he had derived his information, we know not; but in this rejected sufferer he saw only an innocent being, the victim of popular caprice and cunning malice. His benevolent actions, his pure and heavenly doctrines, his surprising miracles, and his present meekness and patience, all combined to bring conviction to the heart of the thief, long before those prodigies of darkness and earthquake that afterwards sent conviction to the breast of the centurion; and this outlawed sufferer hesitated not to avow his deep convictions, in the earnest plea he advanced, "*Lord, remember me!*" Every other thought seemed lost in a view of the spiritual excellence of the suffering Nazarene and his own spiritual necessities. He asks for no honors, no emoluments, no dis-

tinctions in Messiah's kingdom! All he sued for was a kind remembrance by the dying Saviour: "*Lord, remember me!*"

And such is always the spirit, such the appropriate language of true truth. The burden of sin presses heavily on the heart. Deliverance from sin is the one great boon needed. Reconciliation with God is the one only honor coveted; and in comparison with this, all else is lost out of view and forgotten. "*Lord, remember me!*"

5th. This becomes yet more apparent, in that *the object petitioned for has respect exclusively to the higher interests of a life beyond the grave.*

The other malefactor, yet impenitent, discovers, even in his scoffing request, the groveling desires of his soul: "*If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us!* A rescue from the cross, deliverance from pain, from infamy, from death, and restoration to life, to freedom, to enjoyment on earth, constituted the sum and substance of his wishes. It would seem as if he could not raise even a thought higher!

Not so with his now right-minded companion. He felt pain as keenly, shrank from shame as sensitively, and shuddered at death as involuntarily as did the other. He saw, too, what the other saw not, one abundantly able to rescue him from even these evils, so abhorrent to our nature. But on these he spends not a thought. He looks above and beyond them all! He sees at his side the Son of David, the Messiah of God, the spiritual King, who was to reign in righteousness, long as the sun and the moon should endure. In this kingdom, pure, spiritual and eternal, incapable of being affected by the ills of life, and even by the pangs of death, which was already fast invading his tortured frame, he now desires a portion; and therefore to Him, its glorious Head and King, (clouded though his kingly glory is for the time,) he ventures openly and confidently, yet humbly, to address himself: "*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!*"

But a few days ago, he was an abandoned profligate, a daring ruffian, trampling under foot the laws alike of God and man, in order to gratify his passions, and to sieze on unlawful wealth! But now he is an altered man. His lust of gain is eradicated; his fierce passions are subdued; his love of life itself is forgotten under the impulse of higher, nobler, holier motives. He pants for the life of his soul, for exemption from *sin*, to which he had long been a slave; and totally regardless of the infamy that covered him, of the pain that was racking every fibre of his frame, and of the contempt and mockey that surrounded them both, without spending a thought even on the pangs of death which he knew and felt must soon be upon him; he looked beyond death and beyond the grave, and laid his earnest suit, his one only petition before Him in whom, amid the degradation that

covered him, his *faith* beheld the *Lord of life and glory;* and "*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,*" burst from his laboring heart.

To one judging from appearances only, nothing could be more inappropriate, ill-timed, or absurd, than such an appeal. So far as mere unaided reason could judge, this prayer would seem to breathe the *bitterest mockery.* And yet it was, in truth, the breathing of a faith, sterling, strong, and noble beyond all example that has been furnished in the history of our race.

Christian communicant, is *yours* such a faith in the suffering Lamb of God?

Like the faith of the noble-minded thief, is yours *humble* and self-condemnatory? Is it unhesitating, full, and confiding? Is it open, frank, true to its object through evil and through good report? Is it spiritual also? Does it lead you to disregard all mere external appearances, and fasten the best affections of your heart on the blessed Redeemer? And does it prompt you to overlook the interests of time, when put in competition with those of eternity? Are you conscious of a solicitude, deep and habitual, for a portion in the blessings of Christ's spiritual kingdom; a solicitude stronger, more abiding, more influential on your motives and your actions, than any other object, however important in itself? If so, and only if so, is your faith a genuine and accepted one, like that of the guilty but penitent thief, whose dying plea, "*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,*" drew from the Son of God himself the wonderful response, "*This day shalt thou be with me in paradise!*"

In conclusion, I have but two remarks to offer:

1st. *The subject before us shows that no one need despair.*

It is a quaint remark, none the less forcible for its quaintness, nor for the frequency with which it is repeated, that "The Bible furnishes us with one example of a man crying successfully for mercy in his dying hour, to show that no sinner need despair; while yet only one instance of the kind is given, as if purposely to warn *all* against presumption."

And so indeed it is, and most impressive is the lesson it conveys.

It is, I think, not improbable, that in every community, and perhaps in every congregation of Christian worshippers, are some who need just such encouragement as this example gives. To such I would affectionately say: You feel that you are guilty; you are sensible that you yourselves are in peril, and that unless you be converted and become reconciled to the mighty God through Jesus Christ his Son, you will be lost, for ever lost!

It is even so. But you do not feel your hearts touched with true compunction. You are conscious that the power of sin is not yet subdued within you; that even the love of sin is not yet

destroyed; and you cannot feel that you have a right to approach the Saviour. You sometimes even fear, aye, truly and sadly fear, that for *you* salvation is hopeless; that you are abandoned of God already.

To all such my earnest council is, consider attentively the case of the dying thief; and where could you find a case, how could you even imagine one, to all appearance more hopeless than was his? And yet he applied to the Redeemer. He was heard; he was accepted; he was pardoned and saved. And at this moment, the poor guilty thief, who on Calvary mingled his earnest prayer with his dying breath, as he hung by the suffering Saviour's side, is a ransomed spirit, surrounded by the pure joys of heaven, hymning the praises of redeeming mercy. And why? Examine his case closely, and the grand secret will become at once apparent. He stopped not to deplore his own hopeless prospects; but, once aroused to discern his guilt and his peril, he looked away from himself; he turned promptly to the mighty Redeemer; and he threw himself, just as he was, guilty and perishing, without excuse and without delay, on the abounding mercy of that Saviour. "*Lord, remember me;*" it was the soul's deep echo of the sinking Peter's cry, "*Lord, save, or I perish!*"

Go, ye resolute and desponding ones, go cast yourselves wholly and unreservedly into this mighty Saviour's hands, and peace, light, strength, and joy will spring up in your troubled hearts too.

2d. Once more. *To the Christian, when contemplating an approach to the Lord's table,* this subject is *rich in instruction and replete with encouragement.*

When preparing to surround the table of your crucified Redeemer, in commemoration of his love, you know that you are to be moved by a thankful remembrance of his death, as the great atoning sacrifice for sin.

On each such hallowed occasion, you have sins to confess, pardon to solicit, strength to implore, and every spiritual blessing to ask of him. Draw near, then, to that sacred table, with unwavering confidence, with an honest and a believing mind. Open your whole heart before your Lord. Tell him all your sorrows; acknowledge all your weaknesses, your follies and your sins, and ask, with a holy confidence, for every mercy and every blessing you need.

And while you affectionately remember Jesus at his table, doubt not that He who on the cross listened graciously to the appeal of the dying thief, "*Lord, remember me,*" will hear your heart's earnest cry, will remember you, supply your wants, and renew your strength: for he is still, and he ever will be, "*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*" Amen.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

Orginal---Monthly.

FROM LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY REV. J. M. SHERWOOD.

VOL. XXVI.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY J. V. PETTIS,
24 Beekman Street.
Tobitt's Combination-Type.
1852.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

CONTENTS OF VOL. XXVI.

1852.

SERMON.		PAGE.
DLXIII.—God's Work in the Midst of the Years,	By Rev. Leonard Bacon, D. D.,	1
DLXIV.—The Baptism of the Holy Ghost, the great present want of the Church,	By Rev. Jesse T. Peck, D. D.,	10
DLXV.—Husbands and Wives,	By Rev. Wm. Adams, D. D.,	25
DLXVI.—Christian Liberality,	By Rev. Asa D. Smith, D. D.,	35
Discipline of the Family	Dr. A. D. Smith,	47
DLXVII.—The Dignity of the Christian Ministry,	By Rev. Duncan Kennedy, D. D.,	49
DLXVIII.—Practical Atheism -	By Rev. A. L. Stone,	65
Be Still - - -	- - - - - -	72
DLXIX.—The Invisibility of God, -	By Rev. Henry M. Field,	73
DLXX.—The Buried Seed Corn; or Life from Death	By Rev. E. L. Cleveland, D. D.	85
Earnestness in Religion -	- - - - - -	94
A Word to You -	- - - - - -	95
DLXXI.—True and False Religion,	By Rev. Heman Humphrey, D.D.	97
DLXXII.—The Golden Calf -	By Rev. Wm. B. Sprague, D. D.,	110
DLXXIII.—The Religion of Pantheism,	By Rev. Enoch Pond, D. D.,	121
DLXXIV.—The Great Lesson of Man's Earthly State	By Rev. A. C. Pierce,	133
Moral Influence,	N. Y. Recorder,	142
The Gospel Precious.	Dr. A. Alexander,	144
DLXXV.—"Here a Little, and There a Little,"	By Rev. G. B. Cheever, D. D.	145
DLXXVI.—Christians the Salt of the Earth	By Rev. C. A. Smith, D. D.,	153
DLXXVII.—A Way may seem right, yet lead to Hell,	By Rev. Romeo Elton, D. D.,	161
Live to do Good	Dr. Todd,	167
DLXXVIII.—The Mission of Woman under the Gospel,	By Rev. M. J. Hickok,	169
DLXXIX.—The Happiness of the Pious,	By Rev. Talbot W. Chambers,	184
DLXXX.—The Light of Christian Piety,	By Rev. Jonathan Brace,	194
DLXXXI.—Thirsting for God,	By Rev. Geo. Thacher,	204
Riveted to Christ,	Rev. J. P. Thompson,	213
Influence,	Dr. Williams,	216
DLXXXII.—The Death of Christ	By Rev. Mancius S. Hutton, D.D.	217
DLXXXIII.—The Christian's Heritage	By Rev. Daniel P. Noyes,	228
The Time of Need,	N. Y. Evang.,	239
DLXXXIV.—All is Yours	By Rev. J. W. Alexander, D. D.,	241
DLXXXV.—The Immortality of Character,	By Rev. H. G. Livingston,	253
Death no Terror,	Rev. J. P. Thompson,	263
DLXXXVI.—Joy in God through Christ,	By Rev. R. W. Dickinson, D. D.,	265
DLXXXVII.—Mercy Rejoiceth against Judgment,	By Rev. L. F. Dimmick, D. D.,	275

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 1, Vol. XXVI] JANUARY, 1852. [Whole No. 301.

SERMON DLXIII.

BY THE REV. LEONARD BACON, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE CENTRE CHURCH, NEW-HAVEN, CONN.

GOD'S WORK IN THE MIDST OF THE YEARS.

"O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."—Habakkuk iii. 2.

"*In the midst of the years.*" Time, like eternity, is full of God and of the glory of his power. All that succession of events which constitutes time, proceeds from his creative and upholding will, and is directed by his "steady counsel." All that great machinery of worlds by whose movements duration is measured; all that mechanical arrangement of the visible heavens, and the dependence of world upon world, by which the material universe becomes a great time-piece, for the use of all intelligent creatures, is from God in its origin, and works with its unfailing precision, under his constant inspection and care. Thus God's ceaseless work in nature is maintained unchanging "in the midst of the years." As day to day uttereth speech, as night to night showeth forth knowledge of him, so God is working in all those cycles of time in which the heavens declare his glory. The seasons, as they fill up the year with their vicissitude of heat and cold, of blossoms and decay, are themselves all full of God. In the devout expressions of a poet once almost too familiar to be quoted, but now less known to the young than to the old—

"These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the *varied* God. The rolling year
Is full of thee. Forth in the pleasing *spring*
Thy beauty walks; thy tenderness and love
Wide flush the fields; the softening air is balm;
Echo the mountains round; the forest smiles;

And every sense, and every heart, is joy.
Then comes thy glory in the *summer months*,
With light and heat refulgent. Then thy sun
Shoots full perfection through the swelling year."
"Thy bounty shines in *autumn* unconfined,
And spreads a common feast for all that live.
In *winter* awful thou! With clouds and storms
Around thee thrown," "thou bidd'st the world adore."

The year, then, as it comes forth from eternity, and traces its circles in the heavens and on the earth—the year, as it leaves its marks of growth or of decay in all the realms of animated nature, as well as in the detrition of rocks or mountains, and in the layers which the waters deposit on the shores or in the bottom of the deep—marks and reveals the steady work of God. When you count the consecutive rings that have made the slow growth of some old tree, where year after year has added each its little layer, there you see the records of God's ceaseless "work in the midst of the years." In those long centuries, there were years of drought and years of abundant growth; there were years of storms, when one huge branch and another was torn from the parent stem, and when the boughs, battling with the winds on high, and the roots grappling the rocks beneath the soil, gained strength from conflict; and years when all the processes of growth went on in silence and peace; but in the midst of all those years, God's work still held its steady course: his was the storm and his the calm; his was the summer's noontide heat, and his the cooling dew of night; his were the genial showers, and his the burning drought; and so, in the midst of the years, his work went on, and there are its records.

But there is a work of God differing altogether from these operations of his creative and sustaining power—a work to which every thing in nature is subordinate. It is his work of grace, his work of redemption and recovery in this lost world, his work of establishing his own kingdom in the souls of men, and of winning to himself their affectionate obedience; that work of his which, in its progress and its ultimate achievements, is to fill the earth with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

In the mind of the prophet, this work of God was identified with the welfare of that chosen nation, that peculiar people, which God had placed in a covenant relation with himself, and in which, according to the ancient promise, all the kindreds of the earth were to be blessed. It may be presumed that, in the strict sense of the word knowledge, the prophet himself knew but little of the reach and grandeur of God's work of grace in this world, and even less of the peculiar methods by which that work is carried on and is to accomplish its glorious results. Little did he know what wonders God would bring forth out of his secret counsels at the coming of Christ, or how those wonders would come to pass. Little did he know of the setting up of a purely spiritual kingdom of God, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, bar-

barian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all in all. Little did he know of a dispensation in which the knowledge and worship of God was to be detached from the special national institutions of the Hebrew Commonwealth, and spread abroad through the world by the preaching of the Word, in the name of a Redeemer slain for all. But the Spirit of God that was in him knew all the glorious future, and therefore the glimpses which that Spirit gave him of the work of God, near or remote, and all the thoughts, emotions, and desires which that inspiration breathed into his soul, were in accordance with the grandeur and comprehension of God's work. Thus it is possible that to us to whom Christ has come, the light of the world—to us who have seen the work of God's new-creating grace expanding itself and breaking over the limits which hedged in the ancient dispensation—there may be in the prophet's words a reach of application, and, in that view, a depth and fulness of meaning far beyond what he could then comprehend or imagine. And this, if I read aright, is what the apostle Peter tells us, when he says that "the prophets who prophesied of the grace that should come to us, inquired and searched diligently concerning the great salvation, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that was to follow; to whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us, they did minister the things which the angels desire to look into." Let us follow, then, the utterance of the prophet in our text, and see what lessons we may gather from his words, in the light of the completed gospel of Christ.

This third and last chapter of the writings of Habakkuk, though it takes the form of a distinct ode or psalm, and, as such, is complete in itself—the sublimest and most exquisite composition of its kind that can be found in any language under heaven—is nevertheless intimately connected with the two preceding chapters; and to the subject-matter of those chapters it continually refers. The two former chapters are prophetic, and are accordingly entitled "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see." This last chapter is a sublime hymn, a song of adoration and devotion, and it is therefore entitled "A Prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet." In the first and second chapters, which are one continuous composition, the prophet sees God's judgments coming upon Israel, then upon Israel's oppressors. At the beginning, he complains that the land is full of violence and injustice. Then (i. 5) God replies, and shows that dreadful vengeance is about to be executed by the Chaldeans, who will sweep Israel into captivity, and will ascribe their victory to their idols. Then (11) the prophet deprecates God's wrath, and humbly, but earnestly, entreats him to restrain the proud destroyers. Again (ii. 2) God speaks, and bidding the prophet write the vision, he shows that the Chaldeans also, proud, insatiable, cruel, and idolatrous, when he had made their *wrath to praise* him, shall be themselves destroyed;

and thus the prophecy closes, proclaiming that "God is in his holy temple," and bidding "all the earth keep silence before him." In brief, the prophet, living not long before the Captivity, and bewailing the wickedness of the age, foresees the execution of God's wrath against that wickedness; and he puts his vision upon record, mingled with earnest pleadings for mercy, and with strong expressions of confidence in God; for the very vision of God's coming judgments assures him that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." All this is a sort of commentary on the "prayer" or psalm in the closing chapter. The psalm begins, with lyrical abruptness, "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid." It recalls and celebrates God's wonderful interpositions of old for the salvation of his people; and it closes with the sublimest and most cheering utterance of trust and joy in God.

We see then what years those were of which the prophet speaks in the text. They were years of declension and prevailing wickedness, and years of God's displeasure. "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid! O Lord, revive thy work; make thy work to live; keep thy work alive in the midst of the years!" The scroll of years to come had been unrolled before him; and as he saw, at one view, what lay around him and what God revealed to him of the future, he was filled with dismay. Israel, laden with iniquities, was to be overwhelmed with calamities. The chosen people were to be swept away from their own land; and then the proud and fierce barbarians, that led them captive, were to be crushed under God's displeasure. In such years, what would become of God's own work; his work of mercy, causing the just to live by faith, and filling the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord? And therefore he cries to God, "Oh, keep alive thy work as these years of terror roll away!" His first and foremost thought is that of the paramount importance of God's spiritual and saving work. That work of God is dear to all God's children; and as they look over the uncertainties of the future, their solicitude is that God's great work may live and prosper.

There is, in the text, another thought intimately blended with this. See how the mind of the prophet advances from one member of the text to another.

> "O Lord, thy work in the midst of the years revive,
> In the midst of the years *make known!*"

He knows—the spirit of faith assures him—that God's great work *will* live, and will outlive every catastrophe. His prayer then is not merely that God will keep his work alive in the midst of the years. The prayer rises to a bolder strain, as it swells into importunity. It beseeches God not only that in the midst of the dark years to come he will make his work to live, but that in the midst of the years he will make it known. It is like the prayer of Moses in Psalm xc. 16, 17: "Let thy work *appear*

unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Often God carries on his work out of the sight of men. It may seem to stand still—it may even seem to retrograde—while yet it is advancing, and its triumph is steadily approaching by processes beyond the reach of human knowledge. Often—nay, sometimes for a long series of years together, or even for successive ages—he is working out of sight, slowly maturing the arrangements, and accumulating the instrumentalities and influences by which, in the end, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of his glory.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will."

Often he draws a veil of thick darkness over himself and his great work. His work does not appear to his servants, nor his glory to their children. The beauty of the Lord our God does not break forth upon the souls that watch for its appearing. The powers of darkness seem to triumph, as if the redeeming and new-creating God had abandoned his work. But even in the midst of those years, his work which he planned from eternity—that work of his for which, in the fulness of time, God himself was manifest in the flesh—lives on, and makes its progress unperceived. As in the night, he is silently preparing the day, and bringing the sun to its rising; as in the winter, when the mountains stand clad in snow, and the streams are locked in ice, and universal vegetation seems dead, he by a thousand unseen processes is working still, and is making the world ready for the sudden renovation of the spring; so in the midst even of those years when man sees nothing of the progress of God's redeeming work, he still keeps his work alive, and is preparing the arrangements and means by which, when his appointed season comes, light and life, beauty and joy, the beauty of holiness and the joy of his salvation shall break forth and fill the earth. Faith waits for that glad season, and as it waits, it prays with importunate desire:

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants,
And thy glory unto their children."
"O Lord, thy work in the midst of the years revive,
In the midst of the years make known!"
"How long, O Lord! how long?"

There is yet another thought involved in the text, and involved also in any just conception of God's work in the recovery of the lost and the salvation of the world from sin. The prayer of the prophet is,

"O Lord, thy work in the midst of the years revive,
In the midst of the years make known;
In wrath remember mercy!"

The work of God in this world—that great work which was in *the prophet's thoughts*—is not a work of mere power, like that

which is continually producing changes in the world of nature. It is a work of intellectual, moral, and spiritual renovation, to be wrought in the minds of individual men, and to diffuse itself through all that complicated fabric of relations and mutual influences that constitute society. It is a work then in which God has to do with all the intellectual and moral powers of creatures whom he has made for responsibility, and whom he would recover from their apostasy and ruin by means and processes conformable to the nature which he has given them, and by virtue of which they *are* responsible. Thus, in carrying on his work, he has to contend with the wickedness and wilfulness of those whom he would save, and he must act accordingly Those whom he would save, those whom he calls, those to whom he manifests himself in loving-kindness, rebel and vex his Holy Spirit. Those whom he would lead by his goodness to repentance, often provoke him to a just and necessary indignation, and by their hardness and impenitence treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. Even his own children—his children by renovation and adoption—provoke him and dishonor him, and grieve that Holy Spirit by which they have been sealed. Thus it becomes necessary for God, from time to time, in the progress of his work, to manifest his wrath, and make his power known. Thus, in the progress of the ages, there are seasons, sometimes long, dark, dreadful seasons of wrath and destruction. Sometimes it becomes necessary, in the prosecution of God's plans, that old foundations be broken up; that nations be shaken from their seats; that races of men be swept from the earth; and that darkness and chaos seem to be returning. Such a season of God's righteous visitations, such a series of years filled up with vengeance and destruction, was before the mind of the prophet when his emotions found utterance in this prayer. His thoughts, piercing the future, had caught some terrific glimpses of what was soon to come. In prophetic vision he had seen the approaching manifestations of God's displeasure against sin. Those years, the scroll of which had been unrolled before him, were to be years of wrath. He sees God's wrath about to break forth upon Israel, and upon the heathen. God's wrath—oh, how dreadful is God's wrath! "I have heard," he cries, "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid!" "O Lord, in wrath remember mercy!" As Abraham pleaded with God for the cities of the plain, as Moses pleaded with God for Israel in the wilderness, so the prophet intercedes with God in behalf of God's own work, and cause, and people. Such is the privilege, not of patriarchs and prophets only, but of all believing souls. They partake, as it were, in Christ's own office of intercession for the world. Who can tell how often their prayers prevail, to hold back or turn away the destroying wrath of God?

I will bring this discourse to a conclusion, by briefly recapitulating some of those general lessons which the text, as thus unfolded, affords us.

I. The prayer for the revival, or the keeping alive of God's work, is the spontaneous utterance of a heart touched by God's Spirit. Not more surely does the needle, touched with the magnetic power, move in sympathy with the magnetic currents that flash around the globe, invisibly to human eyes; not more surely does that needle, pointing with tremulous impulse toward the pole, betray the mysterious agency that has touched it, than the soul in which God's work of spiritual renovation is begun, becomes spontaneously conscious of a sympathy with that great work throughout the world—a sympathy that manifests itself in impulses of desire and hope and prayer. The Lord's Prayer, in its childlike simplicity, opening with these petitions, "Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," was framed for the very purpose of giving fit utterance to this spontaneous sympathy with the work of God. Wherever that prayer is breathed from the heart of faith and love, there is fulfilled that ancient prediction concerning the Redeemer, the King in the kingdom of God, "Prayer shall be made for him continually;" *for him*, that is, for his cause, his interest, his kingdom. This inward, living sympathy with God's renewing and restoring work, the work for which Christ came into the world, is part of our union with Christ, by which we are his, and he is ours—our Lord, our life, our light, our joy. Thus, in the words of an apostle, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with Jesus Christ his Son."

II. God's work is often going on in the world when it is not seen or made known, when even his own people are not permitted to discern its progress. You remember Elijah fleeing into the wilderness, and there crying from his cavern to his God, "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." But what saith the answer of God to him? "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even then, when it seemed as if all Israel had apostatized; when persecution had silenced the voices of the prophets in death, and the last of them all was a fugitive; when darkness, like a funeral pall, was over all the land of promise; even then God was working.

So it ever has been; so it ever shall be, even to the glorious consummation. In the winter he is preparing the verdure and the bloom of spring. In the darkness he is working, carrying on his unknown processes—he with whom is no darkness at all; and when he is ready, there shall be light. Over the void and formless chaos, the Spirit of his love and power "sits brooding;" and, ere long, as the new world, shaped out of infinite disorder, emerges in its beauty, and takes its place in the vast harmony of the creation, the morning stars shall welcome it with songs, and all the sons of God shall shout for joy.

III. *Sometimes it is* necessary for God to carry on his work

by dispensations of wrath. Sometimes things are at such a pass that there is no other way for God to answer the prayers which he breathes into the hearts of his own people. The cry of the oppressed and wronged goes up mingling with voices from under the altar, "How long, O Lord, how long wilt thou not avenge our blood?" "And will not God avenge his own elect?" Yes: "By terrible things in righteousness thou wilt answer us, O God of our salvation." By his wrath poured out upon the nations, or by his rod that smites his beloved ones with a father's tender carefulness, he is working his own work, and bringing to pass the good pleasure of his goodness. When God called the Chaldeans in his wrath, and they swept over Israel like a destroying whirlwind, what were they but the stormy wind fulfilling his word? For aught we can say, such a manifestation of God's wrath may be, at this moment, ready to break upon the world. Ages of systematized injustice and deceit, ages of wrong-doing and oppression on the part of governments, ages of suffering and of progressive degradation on the part of subject nations, seem to have come near to some great crisis. What that crisis shall bring forth, as its immediate results, He only can foretell who is making all things to work together for the accomplishment of his eternal counsels. The year now opening is likely to be, throughout wide regions of the European continent at least, a year of terrible convulsions. Already we begin to see, as it were, upon the eastern sky the glare of the kindling conflagration. Already we see "upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." It is easy to comfort ourselves with the belief that a new order of things is about to be established in that old world. It is easy to dream that, in the next rising of the nations against their oppressive governments, there shall suddenly come forth from the confusion a new and orderly condition of society, in which all political institutions shall rest on the foundation of justice, and shall have no other end than the common welfare, and in which the Word of God, no longer bound and hampered by the alliance of the civil with the ecclesiastical powers, shall have free course and be glorified. But when we think how long and slow a process it is for a people to learn the art of self-government; how slowly new political arrangements are compacted into strength and durability, and how slowly justice forces itself into law and the administration of law where old prejudices and established interests are to be overcome; and when we remember how slowly, as men count slowness, God's work of making all things new has seemed to advance along the track of ages heretofore; we tremble at the anticipation of the events that are likely to be crowded into the year that has just begun; "For behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid."

IV. Blessed are the years in which God makes known his work as a work of power and mercy. The remembrance of such years lives for ever in the hearts of God's people. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old." How glad for ever in Israel the remembrance of the year when God brought back the captivity of his people! How bright through all eternity the morning when the Saviour rose from the dead! How cheering to remember the days when God gave the word, and the apostles went forth like stars in their courses! How like a jubilee did the gospel sound abroad over the nations at the era of the Reformation, bursting out of the sepulchre of dead languages, receiving, as it were, anew the gift of tongues, and spreading itself by agencies before unknown! What hope is there for the militant Church, what hope for the miserable world, in such remembrances as these! Every such testimony from the past forbids our despondency for the future. Come what may, come whatever reaction against "the good old cause" of justice and of liberty; come whatever triumph of oppression; come whatever deepening gloom of superstition and of spiritual despotism; come whatever despair upon the hopes of those who look for "a good time coming" without faith in God; the believer, remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High, still "bates no jot of heart or hope." His—though the heavens be dark above him, and the earth around be desolate—is that immovable confidence with which our prophet sings, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

In such confidence let us look forth on the portentous sky that overhangs the world. Wrath may be in those portents, the wrath which, in the days of old, has made the world to tremble. But high above those lowering clouds of wrath, is the serene and lightsome sphere of God's all-comprehending work, his work of mercy in the world for which the Incarnate Word has lived and died. This very year may yet become one of those memorable years in which God's work is revived and made known, and in which the prayer, "In wrath remember mercy," receives an answer that shall be remembered till the end of time.

And what shall this year be in our assemblies? What shall it be in the place of our habitation? Shall we be contented with what we are now experiencing of the progress of God's work? Contented, while so many in our assemblies, so many of our own children, have never "tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious?" Contented, while the god of this world holds so firm a dominion around us? Let our prayer be, as we hail this opening year, "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years."

And is there not some memorable year in your individual history? Has there never been a year when God revealed himself to your soul as the God of your salvation; when he made his work to live within you; when he made known to your awa-

kened consciousness his thoughts of love concerning you; when, in the midst of the wrath of which your guilty conscience testified, his mercy beamed upon you from the cross of Christ? Has there been no such epoch in your spiritual history? Behold, now is the time. He is waiting to be gracious.

SERMON DLXIV.

BY REV. JESSE T. PECK, D.D., PRESIDENT OF DICKINSON COLLEGE.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST, THE GREAT PRESENT WANT OF THE CHURCH.

"HAVE ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"—ACTS xix. 2.

THE reception of the Holy Ghost, *in a special sense*, is every believer's privilege. This is evident from the promises made. John said, "He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The *special* character of this baptism appears in the language of the Saviour given by St. Luke: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Now "the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty;" and "they were all with one accord in one place;" "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." It was hence evident that this special baptism was provided for the whole Church. St. Peter confirmed this opinion. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Now this could not have been the only work of the Holy Spirit upon earth. He is the great agent of general grace, and must have been engaged in the ordinary work of enlightening, purifying, and saving men since the first promise of Redemption. But the Christian dispensation was to be marked by peculiar responsibilities, and hence of course by peculiar privileges. The full inauguration of the Messiah-King was therefore attested by the abundant outpouring of the Spirit, which was so special as to be announced and described as an original gift.

The instances recorded are ample confirmation of the general right of believers to this special baptism. We have room for but two: "Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Consider also the brief history given in the context. Paul found certain disciples at Ephesus, to whom he proposed the question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" He supposed them to be true believers—regularly baptized Christians. From both these instances, and other similar ones, it is evident that in primitive theology, a special baptism, in distinction from the ordinary work of the Spirit, was recognized as the believer's privilege. It was not implied in the rudiments of faith, in the first conditions of discipleship. It did not invariably accompany Christian adult baptism. It was received at times more or less remote from primary faith, and hence in different stages of Christian progress. It was given in answer to prayer, which in the forms of primitive simplicity was accompanied by the laying on of hands. And, finally, it was sometimes followed by certain miraculous results, that were in accordance with the spirit and emergencies of those times, yet not essential to the promised blessing.

But, conclusively, the results required imply the special baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is not merely the conviction for sin, the repentance and faith, the regeneration and witness given in the ordinary forms of divine agency, that will impart completeness to the Christian character, that will clothe it "in the beauty of holiness," that will gird it with power to conquer the world; and yet these are results imperatively demanded in the revelation of God. The Church is held responsible for a state of perfection, for a style of activity, and a degree of moral power, which must be utterly impracticable in the absence of this special baptism. It is evidently assumed in her predicted mission that she will have received the fulfilment of the promise which is to her and her children; and when Christians are found without their intended purity, development and efficiency, it may well be asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"

It thus appears, from the promises recorded, the instances given, and the results required, that the reception of the Holy Ghost in some special sense is every believer's privilege.

But how is the question of the text to be answered by the mass of believers at the present time? Perhaps few could reply, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Unquestionably, however, large numbers must answer in the negative. They have been truly converted, are

recognized as believers by the Church and the world, and perhaps by the Omniscient God. Still they are only "babes"—weak in faith and very inefficient. They have at no time felt the corruptions of their hearts so as to make them *cry out* for deliverance. They have not bewailed their sinfulness for days and nights together, engaged in fervent, agonizing prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, determined never to rest until they could "reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." They have not felt the holy violence of faith, that knew no denial, and claimed, in present renovating power, the baptism of fire. They have not realized the dissolving energies of the Holy Ghost, pervading their whole being, and filling their souls with a burning desire for the glory of God. Or if so, they have been unfaithful, and are now uttering their lamentations by the rivers of Babylon, with their harps hung upon the willows.

Though devoutly grateful for the special manifestations of saving grace, wherever they appear, the friends of Zion cannot fail to see and mourn over her low estate. *Inefficiency* is felt to so great an extent as to excite alarm and anxious inquiry into its causes and remedies. The Church question—involving the whole field of its essential and organic life, of its historic and prophetic relations to itself, to human governments, and to the ultimate destiny of the race—has no one aspect so intensely interesting as this: *What is its essential want?* With all deference to those who seek to solve this problem in other modes, we believe that

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST IS THE GREAT PRESENT WANT OF THE CHURCH.

In proof of this position, we observe:

I. *The Vision of the Church is obscure.*

From the modes of her being, and the nature of her mission, the Church is required to examine with great accuracy the moral condition of the world. She must study profoundly her own state, and the wants and woes of those who are out of her pale. But she does not succeed well in these efforts. Thousands of her members cast a momentary glance at their own hearts, and are flattered by the view, seeing nothing but virtue, where pride, avarice, envy, lust, and revenge have their undisturbed habitation. The soul's reflection cannot reach these depths of concealed depravity. The light is insufficient. The road to heaven is a *narrow* way, but do not Christians generally think it exceedingly broad? The boundaries of the road, which to an accurate vision would be distinctly marked, seem quite undefined; and when they suppose themselves in the way to life, it is quite possible that they are in "the broad road that leadeth to destruction." There are dangers before them, but they cannot see them; dangers in their worldly prosperity, but they think it the best of fortune; dangers in their levity, but they think it merely innocent joy; dangers in their splendor of dress and equipage, but they think it only decency and good taste;

dangers in their sumptuous entertainments and fashionable amusements, but they regard them as essential modes of social refinement. There are frightful dangers in the outward prosperity of the Church, in her accumulating wealth and numbers, conveniences and secular power; but she takes these to be the true signs of her prosperity, and ever and anon reaches out her grasping hand for more. These are sad evidences of obscure vision. But there are others.

A work of vast moment is committed to the Church; but how little of it does she see! A circle of a few miles bounds the vision of her greatest numbers. And even within that narrow circle, hundreds are perishing for lack of spiritual food; but they are not seen. The hours and the moments of wicked men all around these professed Christians are made up of eventful crises on which eternal life and eternal death depend; but they come and pass, with their momentous issues, unnoticed!

Far off in the regions of idolatry, what deep and damning guilt preys upon the souls of men!—what agonies wring and crush the heart!—what fearful corruption rages!—what distressing doubts hang over the great unknown!—what countless myriads are moving off, in all the misery of unpardoned sin, every day, into the world of retribution! But all this is nothing to the Church. She cannot see it. She has, it is true, an idea that there is something to be done in this direction; but, whatever it may be, she seems hardly aware that *it requires haste;* and hence she calculates, with cool and exact economy, how much she can spare towards it, from home demands and worldly gratification; proposing in all sincerity to send a few missionaries more each year into this vast field of the morally dead. What is it to the Church that there are six hundred millions of deathless souls, unaware of the revelation God has made to man of the Saviour he has given them—of the immortality to which they are destined—of the bright glories of the heavenly world, and the deep horrors of an endless hell?

Now, no light of science that ever dawned upon the world can illuminate these "dark habitations of cruelty." No inquiry of human reason can ever reach the moral death that pervades the world. No natural eye can gaze into these depths of human misery. No merely natural philanthropy can ever explore these abodes of sin. Nor can any ordinary Christian sight penetrate this vast profound of darkness and wo.

But the special reception of the Holy Ghost is a baptism of light. He is God, and "God is light. In him is no darkness at all." It was to this Divine Spirit that we were indebted for the first view of our sinful hearts. It was his gracious light that revealed the cross, and that has led us every step we have taken in the way to heaven. But hitherto we have received this light in limited portions, just as God has seen to be suited to us, just as our faith has commanded. Hence this obscurity of vision. But "*light is sown for the righteous.*" Provision is made to take

all this obscurity away. The promised baptism of the Holy Ghost is a flood of light, penetrating the darkest recesses of the soul, revealing its most concealed corruption. Receiving this, the Christian, sanctified but in part, could not return from an examination of his heart, congratulating himself that there is so little sin there. Its very fountain of inbred corruption would be exposed, causing him to groan in anguish, to "abhor himself, and repent as in dust and ashes." But to the same mind this light would reveal more distinctly than ever its cause of gratitude for what the Lord had done—the evidence of its justification—the honor of sonship—the open "fountain in which to wash from sin and all uncleanness."

It is a clear light, reflected from the mind upon the Word of God. It opens with astonishing brightness the promises of the gospel, and strongly illustrates the Divine providences. It quickens the inquiring and active powers, and pushes investigation far out into the world of suffering humanity. It reveals with great distinctness the "high and holy way cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in." It discovers dangers that were never before realized. It shows the perilous track of a wandering Church within the unhallowed precincts of sin. It compels the soul to shrink from and abhor the very things which before it has earnestly coveted. It trembles to see that the outward splendors of the Church, once deemed the reliable evidences of success, are but the attire of a harlot, both revealing and inviting illicit intercourse with a godless world.

It is a baptism of light, uncovering the responsibilities of the Church; the fearful power of sin over the hearts of men; the peril of neighbors and friends out of Christ; the delusions of errorists in the struggles of reason after truth to believe, a God to adore, a power to redeem. It more than manifests the fact that "the world lieth in wickedness," which may have been known before. But with this strong accession of light, the soul *sees* the danger of ignorance, the guilt of infidelity, the responsibility and power of a love of sin. It looks out upon the bewildered masses of humanity as they are moving off to perdition, and says, "Alas! *these are my brethren!* I have a personal, living, eternal interest in them. I am responsible for them to the full extent of the moral power that resides in a converted soul, and lies within its reach." It exclaims in agony, "*I am*, O my God, *I am my brother's keeper!* And lo! he goes, uninstructed, unwarned, before my eyes, down to hell!"

We have no room to extend the view. The argument stands thus: the special outpouring of the Holy Ghost is alone a baptism of light; the vision of the Church is obscure; therefore the great present want of the Church is a baptism of the Holy Ghost.

II. *The life of the Church is feeble.*

Christians have a life in common with the race, and they have a life other than that—a "life hid with Christ in God." It is given in regeneration, in the union established through Christ

with the Fountain of life. It is hence characterized as a Divine life—a life "begotten of the Father." It is a union of humanity with Divinity—a life utterly new in all its attributes and functions. The soul which before gave out only the manifestations of death, now gives out those of life; which before was downward, hellward in its tendency, is now upward, heavenward.

It is, moreover, characterized as a life of faith, not merely a life of belief. This is a life of wicked men—a life of devils. It is a life of voluntary reliance upon the Saviour, which renounces all other dependence. It is faith in the unseen, in the unknown, in the non-existent! Taking God at his word, the soul renounces all worship of visible, tangible being, in favor of an unseen, impalpable, spiritual essence. It renounces present gratification, in favor of that which is mainly future. It sets aside the glories of earth for the beatitudes of heaven, which can only exist for the individual when they are realized. And *all on the strength of a word.*

Such is faith. But let it be strictly observed, *it is a life of faith*, in distinction from any number of separate exercises or acts; in itself, a living, God-inspired principle; giving perpetual life to the soul as well when asleep as awake; as well when intensely fixed upon a mathematical problem as when engaged in prayer; a faith that lives in God, that receives all from God, that turns all to God.

It is also distinguished as a life of love; a life of holy delight in the character of God, and a true desire to promote his glory; of delight in the characters of Christians, and a desire to promote their prosperity; of delight in the essential qualities of the human soul, and a desire to save it; a delight in all goodness, and a desire to extend it; a living love, that is a divine reality, whether it glows in the fervor of a pure, intense passion, or rules as a fixed, commanding principle.

Now, such is the individual Christian life; such is the associated, organic Christian life: a divine and spiritual life; a life of faith, a life of love, with all their implied concomitants and results.

But in the same hearts it may vary in its strength and vigor in proportion as its conditions are met. Especially does it depend upon the measure of Divine influence received. And this is comparatively limited at first, though its smallest measure seems too much for the soul in its unworthiness to receive, in its feebleness to endure. But experience proves that these incipient gifts of the Holy Ghost are but the earnest of the baptism in reserve, and made to depend upon faithfulness to the grace already given.

As in individuals, so in the Church. You shall find a collected, organized life, just in proportion to the individual life of which it is composed. And it is this life of the Church which we would accurately estimate.

The individual consciousness of the Church, if it could be

ascertained, would be decisive in this inquiry. We may certainly know something of this from ourselves; and let us ask, how does the interior life report itself? What is the vigor of that life which you profess to have, in distinction from the natural life; your Divine life, wholly unlike any thing human or earthly; your life of faith, renouncing the tangible, the sensual, the present, for the spiritual, the rational, the future; your life of love, fixed on God—God in unchangeable triunity, God in doctrine, God in law, God in redemption, God in fellowship with man? In all candor, is not the inward witness of this life faint, and often inaudible to the spirit-ear?

Actions report correctly this individual consciousness. True, *the work* of an inward, spiritual life may be seen, and it is seen. Many are the spiritual toils, the works of faith, the labors of love, that show a Divine life in the Church. But there are other works that do not subordinate to these; that are not *merely* diverting from the true employment of a living spirit; that are not *merely* accidental or occasional in their demands; works that are engrossing, and that shudder at the light!

Upon the whole, the phenomena of *a deep, pervading, spiritual life* in the Church do not appear at this time. The facts, so far as we are able to judge, compel us to admit that it is comparatively feeble. The general impression that it is so cannot be mistaken; and it is distressing to see the expedients adopted to stimulate this fainting life, and revivify the Church. To some it seems that long, loud, and censorious preaching will accomplish it; to others, that special revival measures are the remedy; to yet others, that a spirit of deeper, purer intelligence, diffused throughout the Church, will secure the desired result; others still think radical changes in the constitution and policy of the Church are demanded; while not a few insist that the hope of religion is in a more critical, liberal, and extended philosophy. But sad experience proves that, under the strongest action of these, and a thousand other similar resources, the Church may wither and die. She has use for an honest and faithful ministry, for special revival measures, for widely diffused intelligence, for improvements in the flexibility of ecclesiastical polity, for a sound philosophy. But it may be doubted whether she ever had more of these than now, and yet her life is drooping.

It is time to consider the fact that the *Holy Ghost* is eminently life-giving, as well as life-being. His special influence is *alone* a baptism of life. We have had it in a small degree. Individuals have felt it in its ordinary power and effect. Churches have enjoyed it in a limited measure. The whole Church is sustained by its usual general grace; but all this is not enough. It is not what the Bible promises. It is not what the Saviour purchased. It is not what the Church of antiquity received. It is not what the Church of the Reformation experienced. It is not what the Church of a former generation enjoyed in the days of Wesley and Whitfield, of Asbury and Edwards. We have

too much forgotten this grand and effective provision for the emergencies of the Church—the very power which the omniscient God foresaw would be imperatively demanded in the Church of the future. We have allowed our minds to be engrossed by subordinate instrumentalities, and just in the same proportion have approached the standard of the Church of the Middle Ages. The Holy Spirit is clothed with omnipotence for the very work we are struggling to accomplish too much without Him. Let the Divine effusion come; let it fall as upon the day of Pentecost; let it baptize the whole Church of the living God; let it penetrate the souls of ministers and official members, and run like fire through the masses of the Church, and then there will be life. This is, by way of eminence, a *revival.* It is pouring the life of God through the souls of men, and wrapping the Church in a flame.

But we must dismiss this topic. Clearly enough, the special gift of the Holy Ghost is alone a baptism of life. The life of the Church is feeble; therefore the great present want of the Church is the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

III. *The holiness of the Church is defective.*

The first great law of holiness is *consecration.* It is so because, in every act of Divine grace efficiently successful, there must be the concurrence of the will. This fundamental principle is conceded in the revelation of God. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies [a part for the whole] a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is an imperative duty, founded in the relations we sustain to God as creatures, and as probationers under a remedial dispensation. But *we* must do it. God will disturb our sinful devotion to self, his great rival in man. He will awe us by his threatenings, and move us by his "mercies." He will send us the stimulating power and gracious aid of his Holy Spirit. But he will not yield for us. We must present *ourselves* as the sacrifice upon his holy altar. It is not till the first point is yielded—our voluntary attachment to sin—that he *begins* the work of sanctification. Nor can the work progress faster than the voluntary consecration proceeds. The full and final realization of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," must involve the free surrender of soul and body, with every power, known and unknown, of life and health, of attainments and reputation, of property and friends, to God for ever. The reservation of the least of these shows a will not yet perfectly subdued.

The next great law of holiness is *purity;* the word implies it. All the terms used in Scripture to define and enforce holiness make this interpretation necessary. The Divine arrangements are made to purify us. If the conditions are met, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"—an achievement so great, it would seem to us, as to be utterly impossible; but the infinite power and faithfulness of God are pledged.

The remaining law which we must introduce is *completeness* or perfection, not in development, for eternal progression is the rule of God's spiritual kingdom. We mean completeness in the character of the Christian graces especially. Impurities mingled with these render them imperfect in themselves, irregular in exercise, and slow in growth. Take love as the great, general grace, inclusive of all the rest. "Perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Plainly, therefore, there is a Christian love that is less than perfect love; a love mingled with fear; and there is a "perfect love that casteth out fear." This is holiness; and surely it is not beyond the claims of God, or the power of redemption. It is only measuring up to the broad command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." This is the great principle and sum of obedience. Even outward obedience proceeding from imperfect love would be irregular, constrained, and deficient; but proceeding from perfect love, in all the details of Christian duty, it would be a holy pleasure. The will of God would be supreme; love to God would be so intense and absorbing that it would not be needful to inquire whether his pleasure is uttered in the way of imperative command or otherwise. The slightest intimation that any act, however hard to perform, however crossing to human nature, would be, in any degree, pleasing to him, would move the whole soul to do it.

Such is holiness in its highest practicable realization. Of course there has been no time in which the Church has fully measured up to this standard. It would be true of her in any age to say she is defective in holiness. As the purification of the heart is a progressive work, there will always be great variety in the holiness of the Church. Nor do we now compare the Church of the present with that of the past. Even granting it could be proved that there is more holiness in the Church now than at any former period, it might be more defective. For the light, the privileges, and the responsibilities of the Church are constantly increasing. She may be defeated now under the same degree of moral power which in a former day would have rendered her triumphant. We seek to estimate her attainments by her present responsibilities.

And first, the holiness of the Church is in proportion to the degree of her consecration. The grand test of consecration is humility. In the heart of an individual, the complete domination of pride is evidence that there is no consecration. Its partial ascendency shows the struggle between conflicting powers indecisive. But self-abasement reveals a consecrated soul. That which values itself does not surrender to God. And the same must be said of the Church. Perfect humility alone would be the proof of her entire consecration.

Upon careful examination, we fear it will be found that her

members as individuals have a high estimate of self, of its value and rights; that they habitually place themselves above their brethren, and in some instances, even above the Almighty! Else how should it happen that they are so exacting in relation to the esteem of others; so sensitive in regard to reputation; so grasping in bargains; so aspiring as to official rank and posts of honor? How is it that so much power of body and mind is concentrated upon worldly schemes; that so much property is claimed for self, and so little really rendered to the Lord, who rightfully claims the whole? Why is so much time engrossed with schemes for the aggrandizement of the individual, and so little recognized as the Lord's? Why are kindred and friends held so closely? and when God asserts his right by taking them to himself, why such immoderate grief, such rebellion against Divine sovereignty? These claims, it must be remembered, are asserted against God, in defiance of his authority. Self is not humbled. It has not accepted its revealed insignificance, its nothingness. It has rejected it, denied it, and preferred its claims to high consideration by signs which none can mistake. The extent of this practical rebellion is alarming; and to the same extent is the evidence of defective consecration in the Church. No talents, no property, no time is set apart to a sacred use, consecrated to God, which is reserved for the use and disposal of self.

Nor can we make a higher claim for the Church collectively. If her consecration were complete, she might show it by her humble views of herself; by her attentions to the poor; by her plainness and economy; by her liberal contributions for the spread of the gospel; but other and opposite facts and principles are exceedingly prevalent. Her separate denominations are characterized by elevated views of themselves. In the general, their arrangements and policy are not adapted to illustrate this distinguishing glory of the Christian dispensation, "Unto the poor the gospel is preached." Artificial distinctions are daily indulged, that bring home to the poor the fact that they are poor, and to a greater or less extent prove that poverty is proscription. Plainness in churches, in establishments, is dreaded as an evil; and splendor is courted and adopted at the expense of credit, justice, and charity. Extravagant demands at home render foreign appropriations small and entirely inadequate. Alas! how much of unsanctified self yet remains in the Church! Defective consecration is marked and daily published to the world.

Next, we must inquire into the *purity* of the Church; not her purity in doctrines and ecclesiastical polity, but in heart. "The pure in heart" love holiness and hate sin. So strong and decisive are these principles, that their developments are visible. It is impossible to conceal them. The conversation, the company, the employment, will all reveal the inner condition. How are *these in the Church?* The fact cannot be concealed that the *purest services* known on earth do not attract the multitude.

The social prayer-meeting, where the purer hearts seek direct communication with God, is generally small. The close and searching religious conference is thinly attended. The rooms of the sick and suffering poor, of "the widow and the fatherless," are frequented by but few. The holy communion is dreaded and neglected by multitudes. These are among the holiest scenes on earth. It must be cause of deepest sorrow that so few have the state of mind which renders them delightful; that there is so much impurity in the Church that the most trifling diversions will prevent great numbers from entering them that attachments to them are so slight as to constitute almost no effective moral power, in competition with parties of pleasure or any species of fashionable amusement. By these simple tests, this grand element of holiness is shown to be wanting to an alarming extent.

But, finally: The holiness of the Church is in proportion to its completeness in the Christian graces, especially love; and obedience is the test of love. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Let us seize at once upon a few specific laws which distinguish the Christian system: "Love not the world, neither the things *that are in* the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Alas! what a fearful amount of disobedience to this most solemn command there is in the Church! Take another: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And another: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Mark this law of progress. See with what authority we are called upward in the Divine life. But disobedience defeats these splendid schemes of Divine love. We do not love God further than we obey him. Our very feeble and imperfect obedience reveals a sad deficiency of love.

In all the great elements of holiness, then, the Church is seriously defective. And the remedy—what is the remedy? is a question of the gravest importance. We have not been wanting in experiments. The common resort is reformation of life, attempted by thousands from deepest conviction of want, and in the utmost sincerity, but followed by the most lamentable failures. The reason is obvious. It is an effort to purify the streams while the fountain remains corrupt. Discipline is another mode of purifying the Church. But the power to execute it is insufficient; the subjects are too numerous; the light to discriminate them is too dim.

The reception of the Holy Ghost, referred to in the text, is a baptism of holiness. He is by way of eminence the *Holy* Ghost, as the sanctifier of believers, as the great source and efficient agent of all holiness in the Church. He alone can give the light which reveals the necessity of purification. He alone can move the great deep of the heart to abhor sin and pant for holiness. He alone can excite that abandonment of self, that complete reliance upon Christ which consecration implies. His power can

cleanse and renovate the soul; can fill it with "perfect love." This is making the tree good. It is thoroughly cleansing the fountain. And may it not be a general blessing? It is the Church, the whole Church, that needs this purification. Its worldly tendencies mar its distinctive character. Its corruptions cripple its energies. Its imperfections make it fearful, where the boldest courage is demanded. But we must conclude this topic.

The special outpouring of the Holy Spirit is alone a baptism of holiness; the holiness of the Church is defective, therefore the great want of the Church is a baptism of the Holy Ghost.

IV. *The power of the Church is inadequate.*

Her power over herself is especially so. She needs control. She needs government with a strong hand. Made up of frail and sinful human nature, she reveals decided tendencies to the world, to self-gratification, to an abandonment of her first principles. She must, from some source, have power to check these tendencies, or she will cease to be the salt of the earth. To speak of them, to utter solemn and repeated warnings, to correct individuals here and there, will not suffice. There is needed a moral energy that will move through the masses of the Church, command their attention, and really arrest their downward career, fix their hearts and wills upon the great aim of probation, and secure a general spirited devotion to it.

Strong conservative power is constantly needed, or pure doctrines revealed from Heaven will be sacrificed to the pride of intellect, the rashness of speculation, or the neglect of indolence. Her morals, which glow with celestial light, will be trampled in the dust; her institutions, pure, simple, and elevating, will deteriorate into unmeaning forms, and at length be wholly superseded by the inventions of men; her primitive government will be despised and abandoned, in favor of spiritual despotism or irresponsible anarchy. The power of a wholesome, vigorous discipline must "mark the unruly," and separate from visible communion such as will not be reformed, and are contaminating in their influence upon others.

The Church, to accomplish her mission, must also be endowed with a strong and increasing aggressive power; a power that will be stronger than sin; that will not hesitate to attack it in high places; that will move forward her reforming agencies with steadiness and effect into all lands and against all resistance. She must have a social power, that will silently and unobtrusively permeate all classes and all governments, subduing the fierce passions of men, arresting the career of ambition, and meliorating the condition of the race.

We have no hesitancy in claiming this moral power, to a greater or less extent, for the Church in all ages. But it is too feeble. A sad want of power is extensively felt at the present time. The marked defects of the Church are partially seen, are acknowledged; but there seems to be little power to remedy

them. Her dangers are deplored, but there is no power to avoid them. Radical tendencies and retrograde movements are viewed by the few with deepest alarm; but they are breaking over every barrier, and moving on to destruction with force apparently irresistible. The want of power in discipline is most lamentably evident. That there are many ungodly persons in the Church, under whose baneful influence she mourns and labors, there can be no question. But what body of Christians feels that it has power to purge itself from this corruption? Efforts are frequently made, but they are seldom thorough. Few pastors can feel themselves sustained in a candid and impartial administration, that will remove *all* who dishonor the Church, and are injured rather than benefited by the false assurances derived from her honorable protection and guaranty.

And how inefficient is our aggressive power! How bold, and obtrusive, and even triumphant, is sin in our presence! How little power have we to reach those who are perishing around us! We see some of them. We lament their doom, but have no strength to avert it. We direct our arrows well, but there is not power enough in the arm to drive them to the heart. We have men to send into every heathen land beneath the sun, but we have not power to send them. The Church abounds in wealth, but she cannot command it. Providence is throwing open a thousand doors to the great field of her future triumphs, but she does not, cannot enter them. Alas! how feeble those energies, which might be clothed with omnipotence!

It is in vain to grasp for secular power to supply this defect. History shows that this is weakness rather than strength. It has been the bane of the Church in all ages. Her true weapons are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds. The elements of her strength are not numbers, nor wealth, nor popular favor. The outpouring of the Spirit of God is alone a baptism of power. With this, renovating her masses, she might gird herself for the conquest of the world. This, when it is full and general, takes away the cause of her weakness, stimulates with amazing energy every power of her being, and thrusts her out for the realization of her destiny. Under such a divine afflatus, the dead revive, the timid become courageous, the weak are nerved with supernatural strength, and the sacramental host of God's elect marches on to triumph and glory.

Inasmuch, then, as the vision of the Church is obscure, the life of the Church feeble, the holiness of the Church defective, and the power of the Church inadequate; and as the special gift of the Holy Ghost, promised in the gospel, is alone a baptism of light, a baptism of life, a baptism of holiness, and a baptism of power, it follows conclusively that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the great present want of the Church.

V. *Finally. This want of the Church is highly suggestive.*

1. *It calls the Church to profound reflection.*

Surely, a fact so immensely important in its bearings cannot be

passed slightly over. Whoever neglects to consider it carefully and thoroughly, must incur a fearful responsibility. Throughout the length and breadth of Zion, let us anxiously inquire how much we have lost by dependence upon false remedies for the evils which have threatened us. What intense folly to have speculated so much and so wildly upon the means of Church renovation and power! What madness to have "forsaken God, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water!" What a grievous waste of time and strength, in wandering so far for help, when it is just at hand! God calls upon the Church to examine cautiously the reasons why this want exists, why it has continued so long. Shall we find the defect in him? We dare not entertain the thought. His infinite perfections, his ample provisions, and his gracious promises forbid it. Alas! in ourselves alone we shall find the guilty cause. Let the search commence more sincerely, more thoroughly, more generally than ever before. The great sin of the Church is surely neglect of reflection. Here and there may be found individuals who are looking intensely into their own hearts, into the providences of God, into his holy Word, into the history of the Church, into the spirit of the age, and into the destiny of the race. But this is not the general occupation of nominal Christians. Oh that we could reach the careless, giddy throng, sweeping on to eternity with no just estimate of this wondrous being, and its fearful responsibilities! Stop, brethren; stop and think. How dreadful is the darkness gathering around you! How trembling and faint that life which should be vigorous with the energy of God! How deep that depravity which defiles Jehovah's temple! How feeble that power which should be clothed with omnipotence! And how unnecessary, how criminal is all this, when our Heavenly Father is "more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, than parents are to give good gifts to their children!" Alas! our thoughtlessness, our indifference will ruin every thing. Depend upon it, the Church will never be better, will never clear up her vision, will never revive, will never present herself without spot, will never put on strength, will never accomplish her mission, till the habit of profound reflection upon the character of her wants, her privileges, and her responsibilities, can be induced in her members. And to this our want calls us this day, with an eloquence of entreaty, and an authority of command, which it would seem impossible to resist.

2. *It calls the Church to deep humiliation.*

Can we, brethren, look at our sad deficiencies, and retain our pride, our arrogance? Is it a small evil, that we have grieved God's Holy Spirit; that we have declined the light, the life, the holiness and power, which he has urged upon us, and spread "blasting and mildew" through such large portions of the heritage of God? Human inventions, carnal gratifications deliberately chosen, and Divine agency superseded! The world perishing, and the heaven-commissioned Church no power to

reach it! Sin, and misery, and ruin, increasing in fearful ratio all around us, and we unable to roll back the burning tide! In God's name, let us bow ourselves into the dust. Let every faithful watchman lift up his voice. Let the alarm be sounded from land to land, from island to island, from continent to continent, until the notes of solemn warning shall fall upon the ear of every Christian in this world of sin! Pride, accursed pride! away with it! trample it into the earth! And down into the dust, O ye millions of Zion! God hath a terrible controversy with you; and if ye will not hear, if ye will not humble yourselves, he will certainly cast you off, and save the world by other hands.

3. *It calls the Church to fervent prayer.*

The Church, the whole Church; for what will it avail if only here and there a weeping few shall pour out their complaints before God? They may save themselves. They may save *some*, far off and near. They may secure refreshing seasons, limited in extent and power. They may even save the general Church from dissolution and Divine renunciation. All this they may undoubtedly do. But this is not what the present age demands. The Church and the world require a revival so deep and all-pervading as to shake the nations; so pure and glorious as to wrap the earth in a flame of light; so benign and penetrating as to enter all hearts, and move and mould all classes of society, all departments of education, all human governments; so divine as to challenge infidelity, grapple hand to hand with the dreaded power of sin, and roll back, with the force of Omnipotence, the advancing tide of human corruption.

And how shall this be done, but by the power of the Holy Ghost? The baptism from heaven will put this honor upon the Church. It is the fire of God to consume iniquity. It is the might of Jehovah to conquer the world. And how long shall we repose in our weakness? How long shall we live without this transcendent Divine energy? This very day God says to us, "Ask, and it shall be given you." Then let us ask. Let the myriads of the Church commence the struggle of mighty prayer. To faith—firm, clear-sighted, vigorous, combining faith—God will give this baptism of fire.

And we see it coming. Already have we heard a voice from Heaven to the Church, saying, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Let then the prayer begin, and be caught up by every tongue; let it extend from church to church, from land to land, until the fervent, persevering, universal cry shall be—

"Oh that it now from heaven might fall,
And all our sins consume!
Come, Holy Ghost, for thee we call;
Spirit of burning, come!"

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 2. Vol. XXVI.] FEBRUARY, 1852. [Whole No. 302.

SERMON DLXV.

By the REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D.D.,
PASTOR OF CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, N.Y.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

EPHESIANS v. 21—33.

"**Submitting** yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

"**Wives**, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

"**For** the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the **church**: and he is the Saviour of the body.

"**Therefore** as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own **husbands** in every thing.

"**Husbands**, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave **himself** for it;

"**That** he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word;

"**That** he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or **wrinkle**, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

"**So** ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife **loveth himself**.

"**For** no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourished and cherisheth it; **even as** the Lord the church:

"**For** we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

"**For** this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined **unto** his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

"**This** is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

"**Nevertheless**, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

The object of this passage must be very obvious to those who will consider its connection with the preceding portions of the chapter.

The general subject is the power of rebuke, the power of reproof and of correction which is lodged with believers. The first mode—much insisted on in this chapter—in which this reproof is to be exercised, is the silent testimony of passive goodness; withdrawal from all fellowship with sin; maintaining a pure and consistent example, which shineth like a light. The *character* of that piety which is competent to make

the right impression is next described, as being of a peculiar type; even one of *joy*, expressing the melody of the heart in the natural sounds of singing; a joy independent of and superior to all artificial excitements. It is immediately in this connection that the passage now before us occurs. Having still in his eye the main design, instructing Christian believers how they may most forcibly reprove the wickedness of the world, and insisting still on the power which there is in a right example, the apostle begins, as the best illustration, with the domestic relations. He amplifies his directions to husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, as if he had said that the right exhibition of a Christian spirit in these several relations, was one of the most powerful methods of reproving the opposite spirit of heathenism, and diffusing correct sentiments concerning the new religion which had come down from God. The apostle was writing to a company of believers in the heart of a heathen metropolis. The city of Ephesus was wholly given to idolatry; public, domestic and private life were all pervaded with the false notions and corrupt practices to which this idolatry had given birth. Proposing to rebuke that evil life, and work a general reformation in that society, the sacred writer, supposing that the grace of Christ was planted in the heart of the individual, begins with *the family*, and describes it as fashioned and animated by Christian principles, to be a model and a light in the very centre of Ephesian licentiousness. He commences with the very foundation of society, with the *conjugal relation*, and introduces a doctrine which was new to those who heard it; a doctrine which he would have Christian believers to follow most religiously, as one which would destinguish them from others, and thereby give a testimony to the blessed effects of Christianity, which would illuminate the contrary habits of the heathen. This is the mode in which the religion of Christ is to acquire ascendency in any community. It can never be permanently established in a pagan country by the desultory labors of itinerant evangelists; it must be planted by Christian families living on the spot, and by the order, and peace, and happiness which are nurtured by religion, presenting a visible contrast to all the customs of heathenism. The family is the basis of the state. The condition of every community will always be according to the discharge of domestic duties, and the observance of household relations. There can be no such thing as the public prosperity of religion, which is not founded on the promotion of religion in the family. This is the first place in which the piety of the individual manifests itself to the eye, the first point in which the principles of the renewed heart come into the field of observation; therefore we need not wonder that the inspired writer is so specific and emphatic in those directions which exhibit a *Christian family* as the purest and brightest

light which can be kindled in human society, and as the high model to which all relations of human life are ultimately to be conformed.

That part of the chapter cited as our text, presents, in the language of the Holy Ghost, the duties of the *conjugal relation*; and to this our attention is now to be directed.

Before proceeding to specify the several forms in which Christian principle will manifest itself in husbands and wives, the apostle enjoins one general rule, which contains the life of this and every other relation. That rule is expressed in these words: "*submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*" This is addressed to Christians at large, as a preface to those specific directions which follow, and may be considered as containing the whole code of social intercourse. Just here, at the beginning, the principles of selfishness and the principles of the New Testament come into direct collision. The former insists boldly on personal rights, and establishes the order of individual precedency, and abates nothing of personal claims. All the strifes which have embittered and agitated the world have sprung from this one root, *the jealousy of a selfish spirit.* But the gospel of Christ packs into one precept all that it would enjoin to regulate the intercourse of man, private and public. The one principle is variously expressed: "Be kindly affectioned one to another, *in honor preferring one another.*" "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." And then follows immediately that memorable statement of the example of Christ, by which the rule is enforced: making himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, humbling himself as a man; doing all this from the principle and power of love. So again we read from the pen of another apostle: "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." And once more in the passage before us: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Here is the true philosophy of human society. Selfishness blossoms into pride, self-conceit, ambition, jealousy, and hate; but Christian love brings forth concession, courtesy, forbearance, good wishes, and good deeds, and so must be regarded as the cement of society, the great humanizer of the world. All that was ever written on the courtesies of life, from the days of Cicero, with his overweening egotism and vanity; to Chesterfield, with his courtly formalism, in the absence of Christian love, is nothing but a show and a sham, designed to cheat the eye, and adapted to disappoint the heart.

The introduction of this general law prepares the way for those specific directions which follow, divesting them of all harshness and severity, and binding even the closest relations of life into a yet more perfect union, by the power of religious love.

I. The first direction is to *wives*, and the duty enjoined is submission unto their own husbands. The nature of this submission, and the degree to which it extends, and the spirit by which it is prompted, immediately follow. This submission is not feigned, but real, and extends to "all things" not prohibited by the commandments of God. The letter of the Scripture is explicit, admitting no other exception; "Let the wives be subject to their own husbands *in every thing*." Society must have its gradations of order; and there is a headship to the family, not assumed, not usurped, but constituted by God himself, and invested with authority by Him who is the maker of us all.

But the submission here enjoined has in it nothing slavish, nor forced, nor reluctant, nor unworthy, nor degrading. The character of this subjection is next explained. It is ennobled and exalted by being compared to the subjection of the Church to Christ, her Lord and Saviour. The husband, as the head of the house, is likened to Christ, the head of the Church. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands. Cause us, then, to understand the nature of the subjection with the Christian Church exemplifies to her Head, and you explain the spirit of the domestic subjection which is here enjoined. It is by misapprehending or overlooking this qualifying and explanatory illustration that this whole subject has been taken out of the region of Christian propriety, and brought within the reach of ridicule, prejudice, mockery and opposition.

What is the subjection of the Christian Church to her divine Lord? Is there one feeling of servility about it? Is it like to any captivity maintained by force, as weakness is subjugated by power? The idea is monstrous, and shocks every instinct and sensibility of a religious nature. The Church is subject to Christ freely, voluntarily, in the spirit of loyalty and love, honoring him, reverencing him, trusting in him, and identifying herself with his glory. What interest can the Church represent, separate from her Head? The honor of Christ is her honor; the good pleasure of his will is her pleasure; his name is her name; his cause is her cause; his life is her life. The Church, here and elsewhere, is called the *body* of Christ; the body and the head—so is the Church related to Christ. Completely identified are they in every object, interest, motive, and pleasure. And this is the relation to which is likened the subjection of wives to their husbands. Then is it a subjection precisely like that of the body to the head, and implies *identity of interests* and *unity of life*. We cannot go astray if we keep in view the scriptural idea of marriage, allowing no place for what is distinct and divided, identifying those who were once separate as *one*, and constituting them parts and properties of each other's life. With this view of the subject, everything repugnant, everything artificial, everything un-

worthy, everything servile, disappears at once, and the wife is subject to her own husband even as she seeks her own honor, and interest, and pleasure. Identity of interest is the essential idea of the marriage relation; and any one who enters into that relation, from whatever motive, without conforming to that idea, sins against nature and God. Some individuals of both sexes have of late publicly assumed ground in vindication of what are called "woman's rights," growing eloquent in depicting her wrongs in being reduced to an unnatural inferiority, and claiming for her an exact equality, in matters political as well as domestic, with the other sex. That these notions are in every instance actually associated with religious infidelity is no accident. The fact you have observed, that these sentiments are advocated by those who avow the name of infidel, and who have taken ground in opposition to the Sabbath, and every other institution of God. We allude to this, not in the way of exciting odium, but for the purpose of exposing an error; and that error is in the very beginning. God has revealed to us a doctrine respecting marriage, and that doctrine is *identity of interest and being* in those who are thus related. There is no other relation of which the same can be affirmed. The connection between parent and child is not to be compared with it. A "man leaveth his father and mother, and is joined unto his wife, and the two are one flesh." But the writers to whom I have alluded recognize no such idea in the institution of marriage. Regarding it as an artificial and partial partnership between persons of distinct interests, and opposite claims, and independent rights; from these unscriptural premises come forth, as results, competition and rivalry, and the clashing of irreconcilable interests; so that the controversy is as infidel as it is indelicate, as ungracious as it is ungraceful, as atheistic as it is offensive, as contrary to the letter of the Scriptures as it is to every refined instinct of our natures. Nothing can be more unbecoming to a woman than every thing which brings her into competition with man; and, could she separate herself from his interests, and climb the steep to which ambition would tempt her, the glory she might win would be nothing but a splendid mourning-suit for her name and happiness. The race of the Amazons existed long before the introduction of Christianity.

Recurring now to the scriptural idea, in which the conjugal relation is founded—that of *oneness*—and revolving anew that subjection of the ransomed Church to her glorious Head, to which it is compared, with what spiritual beauty is the duty now before us invested! "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as the Church is subject unto Christ." The Scriptures know nothing of that kind of subjection which is involuntary under tyranny. It does not liken a Christian home to a prison or a Mohammedan harem, with mere mastery on the one side

and servile fear on the other. It requires that subjection which is founded *in love*, and which would not be other than it is. Would the Church divorce herself from her Lord, or be united to him only by the artificial compression of mere authority? Can we imagine such a thing as a conflict between the members and the head? Are they not *one body*? So, through the power of love, let wives be identified with their husbands. Ideas of superiority and inferiority have no place in *unity*. The eye and the hand are both of the body; they belong to one life. Let the head be sick, and the heart will be faint. And so complete is the sympathy and identity which the gospel recognizes and enjoins in the conjugal relation, that a good wife cannot imagine, much less desire, any interest separate from her husband; so that her subjection leaves no place for wounded pride from the consciousness of inferiority, an idea false and unscriptural; for it is the spontaneity of love, the unity of choice and being, which is as inseparable and indivisible as the life of the body and of the head.

And herein, the Scriptures would teach us, resides not only the duty, but the power of a Christian woman. The two are inseparable. There is nothing so *weak* as the masculine woman-hood which is determined to accomplish an independent will by the mere force of claim, and right, and demand, and so must at last succumb in conflict in this strange feud, as there is nothing in the world half so *powerful* as the acquiescence which is unconscious of inferiority, and thinks not that it could or would be anything different from what it is. Mary Wolstoncraft may write never so eloquently in vindication of woman's rights, and then exemplify her doctrine by a most extraordinary life; but many a Christian wife, who never had dreamed of power, nor thought of ambition, nor was conscious of a motive, under God, but that which is involved in the honor of her husband, is wielding an actual power in the world beyond any thing ever proposed as a direct pursuit by a misguided imagination. What is there, beneath the Spirit of God, so powerful as this second life added to and harmonizing with our own? How insensibly it affects the character! It often happens that a wife is endowed with an intellectual constitution superior to her husband; if that superiority be obviously asserted as a distinct element of conjugal life, nothing but mortification and dislike can ensue. But let the religious idea of the conjugal relation be preserved, and the life of one be *infused* into that of the other, the subjection of one elevates the other, and this by a process in which the one is conscious of no obligation, and the other of no merit. Or the wife is a Christian believer, and her husband is an unbeliever, and evil and froward in all his ways; what power can she ever expect to exert for his conversion, save in that method which the New Testament has prescribed, the way of duty and of love? Of

all others, such an one has need to cultivate, in a special manner, that cheerful and affectionate acquiescence which is at once her ornament and her power. Nor is this an imagination of ours, but a positive teaching of the Holy Ghost, by another of the sacred penmen. "Wives," said the apostle Peter, "be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the Word, they also may, without the Word, be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear. Whose adorning, let it not be the outward show of gold and apparel, but the hidden man of the heart, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." And in the sight of man, too, for what can be compared to those attractions of love, which *are* the most powerful when they *seem* to be the least so? 'Tis the old truth repeated in so many forms, beauty conquering beasts, music taming the denizens of the wilderness.

But duties are relative; nor can we obtain the complete view of conjugal life, as presented in the Word of God, till we change our point of observation, and consider the duty which is enjoined on *husbands*.

II. Husbands, *love your wives*. The act of subjection, through the principle of love, on one side, does not stand by itself, but is to be met and fully reciprocated by love on the other. And *how* are husbands to love their wives? "Even as Christ also loved the Church, an gave himself for it." And how did Christ exhibit his love for the Church? Several things are here specified in answer to this question.

(*a*) *He gave himself for it.* Christ never demands a love from his Church towards him which he did not first of all manifest towards the Church. Love is the abnegation of self for the good of its object. By this method does love always exhibit itself, in doing and giving what is for the gratification of its object. A child manifests its love by the flower which it brings to its mother; and the greatness of love is measured by the greatness of the sacrifices which it offers. Christ gave not only all the love of his heart, but he gave himself, his very life for the Church. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. The love of Christ for the Church was no mere sentiment, but an act involving suffering and death on his part, which suffering he cheerfully endured, and which death he voluntarily experienced, because of the intensity of his love. So quenchless was his love for the Church, that he *preferred* to die himself, rather than she should pine in captivity unransomed, and endure death herself unredeemed.

(*b*) Next to the mention of what Christ endured in exhibition of his love, is the *purpose* for which the Church was redeemed: to be his chosen one, pure and spotless, and glorious in celestial beauty. He identifies himself with the perfection, and happiness, and honor, and glorification of the Church. She bears the name which he has given

her—the Bride, the Lamb's wife. As such she is to be presented in the palace of the Great King, radiant with holiness, without a stain or blemish, the object of supreme delight and ineffable satisfaction.

(*c*) To all which is subjoined the idea of complete identity between Christ and the Church. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Our Lord and Saviour has, in the varied use of tropical language, carried the idea of the closest intimacy, of absolute unity, to the very highest point. Now he likens his Church to the branches of a vine, (which vine is he,) not fixed and fastened artificially by base motives, but growing out from the parent stock, and nourished by the living sap. And here the Church is called his *very body*; joined to him, and living in him.

And *this* is the model to which is likened the love which husbands are to cherish for their wives. The same idea of the conjugal relation is presented here as before, with some enlargement; complete identity of interest and being in those thus related. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." It was not possible to express this idea of *oneness* in language more forcible; and all the theories which infidelity has broached concerning the conjugal relation, entirely overlook this unity, which the Word of God recognizes as the very basis of that relation. He who begins with regarding marriage as an artificial and temporary alliance, will find abundant apologies for active dislikes, and leave the widest margin for rivalry, jealousy, and opposition. But shall a man quarrel with himself? Shall he be at variance with his own body? Can he do otherwise than nourish and cherish his own life? Neither can he do less, if he be tought of God, than love her who is one with him, in God's own ordinance. With her is identified his personal honor and his own delight. In promoting her happiness, he is advancing his own. Could any thing touch her name or welfare, without inflicting dishonor and pain on himself? Is it possible for him to speak or to think of her as separate from himself, as if he were one person and she another? Not if he cherishes the idea of conjugal life which the Scriptures of God have revealed.

Observe then how effectually this doctrine is shielded from all imputation of severity, as though the New Testament gave any authority to a head of a family to play the part of a domestic tyrant. If there be an object in the world unspeakably despicable and abominably profane, it is that of a man who lords it over helplessness; who enacts the despot in his house, delighting to issue peremptory orders, demanding unquestioning obedience to an imperious will, and then, like the Devil in the day of temptation, quotes Scripture in justification of his authority. If

wives are directed to the subjection which springs from love on their part, be it remembered that it is itself to be encompassed, protected, cherished, by a corresponding love, which cannot and will not suffer it to be wronged or disappointed. Be it remembered that, as Christ gave himself for his Church, and so would excite love in his Church to him, a husband's love should so exhibit itself in constant care and kindness as to be the occasion of love in return.

How is the relation ennobled by the comparison through which its duties are illustrated! "This is a great mystery," says the apostle, "for I speak of Christ and his Church." The conjugal relation is at once a symbol of that holy relation between the Saviour and the Church, while the latter is the orginal model to which the former is to be conformed. Wonder not, then, that when the apostle is dilating on the power resident with living Christians to reprove the false notions and habits of the world, he should address his very first directions to those who, related as wives and husbands, are designed to be the signs and exponents of the highest spiritual truths. Let this idea be carried into every Christian household, and it will diffuse a sanctity and a light which cannot be hid. It will convert a common relation into an uncommon power. What a consideration is it, to the head of a family, a husband or a father, helping him to control and govern himself, restraining every harsh word, and forbidding every severe act, and prompting him to all expressions of kindness, to know that the Spirit of God has likened him, in the position he occupies, to Jesus Christ, the head of the Church! Studying his great exemplar, let him give himself to those of whom in a secondary sense he is to be a Saviour. A head is he, not to tyrannize, but to bless and save. Ineffable love, a love which reaches beyond the interests of this life, and embraces the welfare of the soul for eternity, should be the principle which animates him, as he stands, with conscious honor and humility, in his exalted place, the HEADSHIP OF A HOUSEHOLD, at once the representative and the disciple of his Lord. And let all who are gathered under this shelter remember, that in the trustful, grateful, happy love they are required to return, they too have been compared by the Holy Ghost to that redeemed Church which is the body of Christ; and from this derive a motive which shall pervade, and rejoice, and reward their whole life. Thus living as heirs of the grace of God, their earthly relations will help their heavenly hopes. Often as they think of their domestic relations as a source of present happiness, this will be admitted to be the highest enjoyment thereof, that they help the soul better to understand the intimate life which subsists between Christ and believers. The love which a husband cherishes for his wife, will aid him in his religious conception of the love which the Son of God displays for his followers; while the mingled affections of love, honor,

and trust, with which a wife regards her husband, will as often illustrate to her better comprehension, the duties of the Church to its divine Head.

Dr. Johnson once said, that those had a small prospect of happiness who entered into the married relation without fixed principles of religion. It is certain that the institutions we have now considered, bringing down the sanctions of heaven into an earthly relation, and infusing the motives of religion into the affections of life, are the best preparation for its duties and the surest guaranty for its happiness. Whether our great English moralist had the same thing in mind when he framed the sentence just quoted or not, it must be obvious that the individual who has adopted it as the controlling principle of his life, to do all things "*as unto the Lord*," and who constantly consults the inspired page to acquire the knowledge and imbibe the spirit which it imparts, will best be fitted for every relation to which he is called. In the spirit of this injunction, therefore, let us aim to make our families the reflectors of Christ's own love. What a profane perversion would it be, if a Christian household were not remarkable for its heavenly concord and joy. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" If we understand not earthly things, how can we understand heavenly things? If the principles of Christ's kingdom are not applied and exhibited in those common and domestic relations in the midst of which we live, what is it but an imagination that we shall have share in their higher use and range in the kingdom of heaven? Now ye who are light in the Lord, walk as children of light; and as men, when crossing the sea, look up to the sun and the stars for the knowledge of their way, so should those who call themselves strangers and pilgrims here, look up to Jesus Christ, their great sun and light, and bring down the lessons of love into their hearts and their households, to honor every relation, assist every duty, and augment every enjoyment.

SERMON DLXVI.

BY REV. ASA D. SMITH, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE FOURTEENTH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY.

"THEREFORE, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all deligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."—2 COR. viii. 7.

IT seems to be the impression of some, that religion has little to do with the use of property. That it enjoins industry, and utters many a commendation of prudence; that it forbids all fraud and injustice, and requires entire uprightness in all business transactions, they understand and acknowledge. But they are slow to admit its still wider reach. As to the matter of alms-giving, especially, though they deem it in many cases allowable, and even commendable, it is a work of supererogation, an "additionary" affair, rather than a duty binding on the conscience. Singularly do they overlook the fact, that religion, rightly understood, takes in our whole being; it is the sanctifying of the entire man, in all his ways. Why should it be otherwise? What fault can be found with the exceeding broadness of the Divine law? If at one point we be under obligation to God, why not at another? If his revealed will be, in any particular, an adequate guide, why not in all? If the privilege of serving him be ours in one direction, why not everywhere? Especially may we ask, what objection can be raised to regarding ourselves, as to all our earthly possessions, and the whole disposition of them, as the mere stewards of God? Is there not peculiar reason why responsibleness should here be felt? When we call to mind the various and important bearings which the use of property must have, as well on our own temporal and spiritual interests, as on the well-being of others, it were strange if the Bible had either been silent in regard to it, or had spoken but sparingly.

The text is one of the many passages of Scripture which relate to the use of property. It has primary reference to a collection for the benefit of the poor Christians of Judea. Having commended the liberality of the churches of Macedonia, the apostle calls on the Corinthians to do likewise. Whatever else they might possess, he intimates, their character as disciples would be incomplete without the exercise of Christian liberality. Though a specific service is here enjoined, we shall regard this passage as embracing the general principle, and shall proceed to consider

THE DUTY OF CONSECRATING A PORTION OF OUR SUBSTANCE TO PUR-

POSES OF BENEVOLENCE. We shall speak, in order, of the *reason*, the *manner*, and the *measure* of our liberality.

I. The *reason* of the duty. On this head we remark—

1. *It is the natural issue of the spirit of benevolence.* That every Christian should possess this spirit, and that largely, you ask no proof. God is love, and he that is begotten of Him, in his own image, must have a loving heart. To desire the well-being of his neighbour is not something that he may or may not do—an arbitrary affair, that may or may not be enjoined on him; it grows out of the essential elements of his new nature. So the Scriptures assure us, as they describe that nature, and as, in many a precept, they indicate the fitting modes of its development. Love, indeed, is the fulfilling of the law. Suppose, now, there were no specific precepts in regard to alms-giving; suppose you were left entirely to general principles, and to the primary and essential impulses of a Christian heart. Suppose we were assured only of this, that *you love*. With such a fountain, what must be the stream—from seed like this, what must be the growth? Love is not an internal act merely; it works outwardly. It seeks to bless its object, and that by all means, the most effective above all. It earnestly seeks out the best channels and instrumentalities. Now "money," it was said of old, "answereth all things:" and never, perhaps, since the world began, was it so potent for good as at the present day. In connection with modern facilities of intercommunication, and the modern applications of the principle of association, what marvels does it achieve! That little piece of dumb, unconscious gold in your purse, which shall soon be of as little consequence to you as the earth that falls upon your coffin-lid—that bank-bill in your pocket, so light and frail, with which the slightest breeze might so disport itself, and which a few drops of water, or the touch of a candle's flame would so quickly destroy; which shall soon be as little heeded by you as the shroud that enwraps you—think what it can do. Touch with it the magnetic wires of charity, and widow's heart is made glad: the friendless orphan sings for joy; the poor man on his couch of pain finds relief, and there are gleams of light in the cell of the prisoner; the Magdalen is withdrawn from her downward way; to the neglected mariner the comforts of a Christian home are opened; God's blessed Word, with many a good book deriving its life therefrom, moves to and fro among the people; and in a Christian temple, to the poor, else unevangelized, the Gospel is preached. Nay, that piece of gold or that bank-bill takes to itself wings, and over the ocean it goes; on the isles of the sea, on the plains of India, amid the forests of Africa, or in old Armenia, it makes its way, unfolding the banner of the gospel, and winning to it the lost. Yes, my hearers, a single shilling given in charity may be instrumental,

through the tract or the Testament it shall send to the ends of the earth, of turning some dark-minded heathen from his fetische or his shaster to the Lamb of God. Loving your neighbour, then, can you turn from the spectacle of his needs and hoard that coin? With such opportunities before you, can you love to do good, and yet withhold your hand? "He that hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need"—whether of temporal or spiritual aid—"and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Love, my hearers, delights to give—it is its nature to give; it needs no specific commandment—it is a commandment unto itself.

2. To the same result are we led, I remark further, by *a regard for God's glory*. This is one of the chief motives of every true Christian. That God should be honored, he feels, is not only right in itself, but of infinite consequence to the universe. Admiring and adoring his excellency, he delights in all possible ways to honor him. This he may do, first, by being, as a dear child, an imitator of God, especially of that chief perfection of his nature, his benevolence. Were the act of charity abortive, yet by that very act would God be magnified. "Let your light so shine before men," saith our Lord, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. But Christian charity is not abortive; it is the aim and the result of most of its forms to spread the knowledge of God, as through Bibles, tracts, ministers, colporteurs; and thus also, is God honored. Imagine not that you have learned practically what is man's chief end, unless you are ready and eager, with hand, and voice, and purse, to diffuse divine truth.

3. This brings us to mention, as another incentive to Christian liberality, *the love of God's truth*. A motive this, intimately connected with the last mentioned. Divine truth is but the radiance of God's nature; he must love it who loves God. So did David, in common with other Scripture worthies, as his own declarations abundantly show, "Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." Now, what we delight in, it is natural to make known. We read to others the book or the paragraph we admire; we expatiate on the beauties of the landscape that charms us; we publish the virtues of the friend we love. So in regard to the loved gospel. David said, "My tongue shall speak of thy Word." "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings." As well might one leave in silence some vale of Tempe, or garden of Eden—as well might he who has laved his parched lips in some fountain of the desert, neglect to point other weary and fainting travellers to it, as the man who has been led in the green pastures and beside the still waters of God's Word be slow to

proclaim the beauty and the blessedness thereof. Nor can those charities which serve just that purpose, fail of his cordial and generous patronage.

4. I add here another motive—it is that of *gratitude*. In all renewed hearts, this has a place. It is one of the first inquiries of the pardoned soul, as it is the daily inquiry of the growing Christian, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" God needs not our services, but he graciously permits them. No adequate return can we offer him, but it is a joy to the pious heart to make any acceptable return. Apart from the commandment, and from all compulsion—putting the matter on the ground of pure spontaneity—who, that duly appreciates the divine goodness, but would readily avail himself of every practicable and appropriate method of expressing his gratitude. Look around you, my brethren, upon the goodly heritage God has given you; count up your personal blessings, your family privileges, your social advantages, and think of them all as purchased by the blood of Christ. Take your stand by the cross, and remember that you yourselves are bought with a price; think of the hell from which you have been rescued, and the heaven you hope to gain; upon the grace that provided a Saviour, upon the love that dwelt in his heart, and the agony that wrung it. As you meditate thus, and are reminded that this same Saviour has a cause to be sustained, a cause infinitely dear to him; that the way is open to magnify his name among the nations; that in such a work you may engage, and that your gold and silver, with God's blessing, may help it onward—oh, as considerations like these appeal to you, you cannot but respond with a full hand as well as a full heart!

5. But the duty before us is not to be learned by mere inference; our warrant for it is not to be found in general principles alone, however pertinent and conclusive. It is, in many Scriptures, *specifically enjoined*. Knowing how potent is covetousness in human hearts, God has been pleased to give us "line upon line, and precept upon precept." Under the old dispensation, it was as much a matter of duty to consecrate property to pious and charitable purposes, as to worship God. Nay, such a consecration was intimately and indissolubly connected with divine worship; it was interwoven with the whole frame-work of piety. Numerous and very minute directions were given in regard to it, all having the sanction both of promise and of commination. When the Jews, in the time of Malachi, had become neglectful of this duty, God said to them, "Ye are cursed with a curse, even this whole nation." And he added, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Nor was it alone in the law of Moses that liberality was enjoined; it is urged in other parts of the Old Testament, and in its purely moral

inculcations. "The righteous showeth mercy and giveth." "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth for ever." "Trust in the Lord, and do good." "Cast thy bread upon the waters." "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight." "Withhold not good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" In strains like these was God continually admonishing the ancient Church.

It was natural to expect that, in the New Testament Scriptures, the duty before us would be still more emphatically enjoined. The middle wall of partition was now broken down, the door of salvation opened to the Gentiles. The field of beneficence was now the world. To all duty the fully uttered Gospel furnished new incitements, especially to the duty of Christian liberality. It presented not precepts only, but a perfect model—Infinite Love incarnate! True, rules of charity, minute and exact as those of the old economy, we do not find. Nor are they needful. It better comports with the spirituality of the new dispensation, that as to the minutiæ, the specific forms, the metes and bounds, the believer should be left mainly to his own discretion. Needful were tapers in the early twilight, but we may dispense with them now, when the sun is up. It is sufficient that the great essentials of the duty are fully stated, and variously and abundantly urged and exemplified. "Give," said our Lord, "and it shall be given unto you;" and again, "Give alms of such things as ye have." The apostle Paul bade the Ephesian elders "Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." To Timothy he wrote, "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." To the Hebrews he says, "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." You remember the devout centurion's alms. You need not be reminded of that noble example of liberality, when "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need." Nor need I enlarge on that benevolence of the churches of Macedonia, to which reference has been already made, or repeat those exhortations to similar liberality, with which the text stands connected—exhortations enforced by that touching appeal, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." You are familiar with these and like passages;

and as they throng on your memory, you will readily admit that in the New Testament Scriptures, as well as in the Old, few duties are more impressively commended to your hearts and consciences than that of devoting a portion of your substance to benevolent purposes. It is a duty which you can neglect without disregarding the authority of God, than you can neglect to worship him in the closet, or to hallow the Sabbath.

6. It is a further plea for the duty before us, that *it benefits those who perform it.* "It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes." To the liberally minded, God has expressly promised his blessing. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst forth with new wine." "He that had pity upon the poor, lendeth to the Lord and that which he hath given will he pay him again." "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself." We refer not so much, however, to special divine interpositions, as to the natural result of benevolence. That natural result is God's blessing; it is of his ordering that here, as elsewhere, well-doing is well-being.

A bountiful spirit leads to temporal advantage. It favors industry; for he who delights in giving liberally, will the more readily toil that he may have something to give. For a like reason, it is conducive to economy. It is promotive, too, of worldly wisdom. Selfishness more or less deranges our powers, and, among other harms, it puts the judgment in peril. Benevolence restores the balance of the mind. Many a man has become a bankrupt, who, if the sweet spirit of charity had ruled him—raising him above grovelling aims, presenting things in their true relative importance, healing the canker of covetousness, and allaying the fever of financial ambition—would have gone in comfortable solvency to his grave. Habits of beneficence secure, besides, the good will of men, a thing not only pleasant in itself—better, the wise man has told us, than silver and gold—but favorable, also, to success in business. Add to all this, that whatever benefits our fellow-men—linked as we are with them even to the ends of the earth—must re-act beneficially on ourselves. In their advantage, we must be advantaged. Eminently is this true in relation to their moral and spiritual improvement. Much more valuable is your property, other things being equal, in a God-fearing than in a profligate city. Not a movement can be made for the more thorough evangelization of our country, but on the refluent wave there comes back a blessing to your counting-room and your fireside. Nay, not a step is taken in the foreign missionary enterprise, but our land is the richer for it. Not to speak of higher bearings, that work is worth more than it has cost, for the influence it has already exerted, and is destined still to exert, on commerce, manufactures, and agriculture even, on literature,

science, and the arts. The godliness we inculcate is eminently profitable "for the life that now is."

But of far greater consequence is the influence of Christian liberality on our spiritual well being. It is a precious means of grace. In our text it is itself called "grace," from which we may gather, not only that it proceeds from the sanctifying Spirit, and is a Christian virtue, but that its thriving is essential to the soul's welfare. To the same effect is the language of Paul to the Philippians: "Ye have done well that ye did communicate with my affliction. . . . Not that I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Under the ancient dispensation, the spiritual good of God's people was one of the great objects of his various demands on their property. There is a remarkable intimation of this in the reason assigned for the second tithe, "that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always." Many are the spiritual benefits of Christian liberality. It strengthens the principle of benevolence, that prime element of all holiness. It secures to us the highest prime element of all holiness. It secures to us the highest and most purifying of all joys, the joy of doing good. It brings us into intimate communion with the God of love. It deepens our sense of dependence, obligation, and accountableness. It impresses us with the truth that we are not our own, that all we have is the Lord's. It represses the spirit of idolatry in its most insidious workings. It checks that wordliness which is so apt to connect itself with the acquisition of property. It hallows the scenes of business. It sanctifies the artisan's and the merchant's gains, the waving harvests of the husbandman, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. All worldly goods are held and used, not merely nor chiefly to supply the owner's wants, but first of all to honor God, and, as nearly connected with that, to benefit man. The very possession of property becomes thus an occasion of spiritual delight; of the gold and silver of the earth, precious links are wrought, binding the heart to heaven. As the benevolent man interests himself, moreover, in the wants of others, he learns to prize more highly his own blessings. More profoundly grateful is he: better especially does he improve his spiritual privileges. And while in all these ways his own soul is blest, good comes to his family also. If wealth abounds, the perils to his children connected with it will be greatly diminished. They cannot but feel the power of his example. The prayers for them of his quickened spirit cannot but be specially prevalent. There is peculiar reason to hope, not for their conversion alone, but for their eminent usefulness.

Such are the grounds on which we urge the duty in hand. It is possible that while, in general, your convictions have gone with me, the question may still be asked, Is this duty binding on all? Why not? I reply. If it is, as has been shown, a means of grace, who shall be

deprived of it? Do the Scriptures make any exception? Here, it is true, as in other relations, obligation never transcends ability. If we have absolutely no property—if we are literally paupers, we cannot of course, be liberal, except in heart. Were I discoursing in an alms-house, and not in this goodly sanctuary, and to these men of means, I should probably have selected some other theme. But, short of pauperism, in its strictest sense, what limitation can we make? Shall the poor in general be exempt? Because they can give but little, shall they give nothing? They were not exempt under the old dispensation; less was required of them, but an offering they must bring. Nor are they exempt under the Gospel. To the praise of the Macedonian churches, Paul testified that they gave "in a great trial of affliction," and that "their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." You remember the poor widow and her two mites, and how precious her gift was in the eyes of the Saviour. Would you have forbidden that gift? As well think now to tear from her crown of glory its brightest gem. Who would forbid the poor of the present day a like privilege?—It may be asked further, if, indeed, the question be not settled by the example just mentioned, is the duty in hand binding on the female followers of Christ? Do they err in their various forms of charity? Should they rather decline such offices, as some are disposed to do saying, Our brothers, our fathers, or our husbands give? If giving, we reply, be to the brother, the father, or the husbands, a means of grace, why withhold it from the sister, the daughter, or the wife? Their relatives of the sterner sex cannot repent or believe for them—how can they discharge for them the duty of beneficence? Of Scripture testimony touching female liberality, there is no lack. In addition to the case of the poor widow, there is that of the woman who ministered to our Lord; that of Dorcas, "full of good works and alms-deeds which she did;" that of Phebe, of whom Paul testified, she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." It was a prescribed qualification of the widow who, in her need, sought the charity of the primitive Church, that she had herself "lodged strangers" and "relieved the afflicted." The daughter may, indeed, be mainly dependent as to the means of charity, yet not exactly so the wife. The judicious and excellent President Edwards speaks in one of his sermons of certain husbands who "greatly sin against God, in being of an unkind and imperious behaviour against God, in being of an unkind and imperious behaviour towards their wives, treating them as if they were servants;" and he specifies the instance of "forbidding them to dispose of any thing in charity, as of their own judgment and prudence. This," he says, "is directly contrary to the Word of God, where it is said of the virtuous, wife, Prov. xxxi. 20, that 'she stretched out her hand to the poor; yea, she reached forth her hands to the needy.' If God hath made this her

duty," he adds, "then he hath given her this right and power, because the duty pre-supposes the right. It cannot be the duty of her who hath no right to dispose of any thing, to stretch forth her hand to the poor, and to reach forth her hands to the needy." Whatever I might say on other points, on this I am heartily and thoroughly for woman's rights. Yet I need not here enlarge; for there is not among my people, I am sure, a single husband of such notable narrowness of spirit, as to withhold from his nearest earthly friend, from her who is the light of his dwelling, and whose price is "far above rubies," a privilege so eminently appropriate to woman's gentle and loving heart. Need I add that into this duty of beneficence our children should be early initiated? How else shall they be trained up in the way they should go? That parent who fails to instruct and guide his offspring in this matter, to form aright their habits in relation to it, fails in one point, at least, to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

II. From the reason of the duty before us, we pass now to the *manner* of performing it. In the New Testament, as has been said, this is less formally and minutely prescribed than in the Mosaic law. Yet for that very reason certain general suggestions may be both appropriate and helpful.

There are several points to which, however important, we can but briefly advert. We should give *intelligently*, I may say first. By reading, by attendance on the Monthly Concert, and by all available means, we should acquaint ourselves with the various objects of charity; not only that we may give the more readily and liberally, but be able wisely to distribute our gifts. This is the more important, from the fact that under the Gospel so much is left to our discretion. Our liberality should have regard as well to the *temporal* as to the spiritual wants of men. So did our Lord's and there are many reasons why in this respect we should be followers of him. We should look well to our *motives* in this matter. "He that giveth," says Paul, "let him do it with simplicity." It is as possible for us as it was for the ancient Church, to offer "polluted bread" upon God's altar. We should watch against the spirit of pride, of self-righteousness, and of ostentation. We should give *cheerfully*. "Every man," saith the Scripture, "according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." And again, "he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." Of great importance is it that we give *frequently*. To this the Jews were bound by express commands; and for this we too have Scripture warrant. "Upon the first day of the week"—of each week—the Corinthians were directed to "lay by them in store." It is only by frequent benefactions that the spirit of beneficence can be kept in lively exercise. It is, besides, more convenient for most persons to

give in small instalments. More will be contributed in this way. "How do your church manage to raise so much money?" an English Methodist was once asked. "*We are all at it*," was the reply, "*and always at it*." Our *prayers*, moreover, should accompany our gifts. We should give to nothing for which we cannot pray. We should pray for every thing to which we give. As in the case of Cornelius, our prayers should come up with our alms, "as a memorial before God."

To all these suggestions I add, at greater length, another. We should give *systematically*. That is, we should prescribe to ourselves, in the exercise of our best judgment, and under the guidance of God's Word, a plan of benevolence. Every thing is best done by system. He who transacts his worldly business at random, will soon probably have no business to transact.

> "Slight those who say, amidst their sickly healths,
> Thou livest by rule. What doth not so but men?
> Houses are built by rule, and commonwealths.
> Entice the trusty sun, if that you can,
> From his ecliptic line; beckon the sky.
> Who lives by rule, then, keeps good company."

If order and system be proper and profitable in worldly matters, why not in religion? Why, not, especially, in our charities? But let us state more particularly what we mean by systematic giving.

In every congregation, first, collections should be made for the various objects of benevolence, *on some settled plan*. These objects should be determined beforehand. A suitable time should be fixed for each. And to adapt the system to the principles we have now set forth, provision should be made for *presenting each object to every individual*. The advantage of such a method is, that it promotes giving on principle; it makes it easy to give; it tends to incorporate beneficence with the business of life, to make it a habit; it secures to every worthy object a hearing, and prevents the collision and the crowding together of different objects. Appealing to all, it secures a larger number of gifts, and a greater aggregate of charity. This last point is of great importance. It was stated some years since, that in the churches of New-England which contributed to the American Board of Foreign Missions, more than one third of the members, on an average, had hitherto given nothing. It was also stated, that in several churches which had recently adopted the plan of presenting the cause to each member, the amount received was double—in one case it was treble—that of the preceding year. Were a plan like this adopted in all our churches, a new and mighty impulse would doubtless be given to every department of Christian beneficence.

To a complete system of benevolence it is essential, also, that each individual *set apart, at stated periods, a certain portion of his income.* For this we have a warrant in the rule given to the Corinthians, "Upon the first day of the week." It may not be best for all to do it weekly, but the principle may be maintained; it may be done at stated times, if no oftener than yearly. Manifold are the advantages of such a course. It is convenient to the giver, saving him much doubt and perplexity: it is conducive to intelligent and well-considered, rather than blind by and impulsive benevolence. It increases, too, the amount given; and it tends to prevent those fluctuations of charity, with which the benevolent societies are so apt to be embarrassed. Delightful testimony could we give you, did our limits permit, from persons who have adopted this method, as to its happy results, and the great satisfaction they have felt in its operation.

III. We advert, in the last place, to the *measure* of our benevolence. We undertake not, on this point, to give specific directions. Even under the Mosaic law, it was in some cases left to the offerer, to give according to his ability. That is the general rule under the Gospel—"according to that a man hath"—"as God had prospered him." The language of our text is, "see that ye *abound* in this grace." What a man can do, and what abounding is, must depend on three conditions, jointly considered—his capital, his income, and his necessary expenses. Taking these into consideration, every one must decide for himself. We offer, on this point, however, a few suggestions.

Our first remark is, that the Scriptures afford little countenance to the seeking of riches. Competence may be desired—the tools of trade may be secured—a reasonable provision may be made for the future—the providence of God may even put wealth into one's hands, which may be innocently possessed, and with a spiritual mind. Still the language of the Bible is, "Labor not to be rich." "He that is greedy of gain, troubleth his own house." "Give me neither poverty nor riches." "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." I observe further, the principle of *self-denial* should be largely concerned with our liberality. A low estimate of this duty have we, if we never carry it to the point of retrenchment or of sacrifice. David is an example for us, who would not offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing. So are the churches of Macedonia, of whom Paul said, "To their power, I bear them record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves." That man has little of the spirit of benevolence, who knows not what it is, in the Scripture sense, to give *more than he is able.* Yet again I remark, though I specify no particular ratio of liberality as suitable for all, it would seem that, for a large portion of the Church, one tenth at least of their income would be no

excessive contribution. Even that falls below the Old Testament standard; the Jew devoted to pious and charitable uses not less, probably, than one third of his receipts. With our superior privileges, our clearer light, our stronger motives, our wider field, ought not our beneficence to surpass that of Judaism? Nay, there may be cases, I cannot doubt, in which a Christian's charities may even trench on his capital. Such a case there was, when the disciples sold their houses and lands, and laid the price of them at the apostles' feet. There would be more such cases, were the Pentecostal spirit revived. It would be no hardship, indeed, but a blessing every way, were the wealthy followers of Christ to become more commonly their own executors.

I add, only, in deciding the amount of our gifts, we should be careful to do it from the most suitable stand-point. In a certain town, an association had been formed to aid the cause of missions. A poor man subscribed two dollars. On the day of the first annual meeting, he called on his pastor for the purpose of increasing his contribution. Taking the subscription paper, and examining it, he said, "I have been thinking how this paper would look, *carried up to heaven*, as the free-will offering of this church to send the blessed Gospel to the heathen—the poor, perishing heathen! I have been thinking how *my* offering would look, and I am ashamed of it!" When *you* decide, my hearers, what you shall give, take your place in imagination on a dying-bed—at the judgment-seat—or before God's throne—and consider well how the interests of the soul, and the cause of Christ, and the riches of this world will appear there, and what measure of remembered liberality will satisfy you!

Thus, my brethren, have I spread before you the Christian duty of beneficence, in its ground, its manner, and its measure. This is not a theme for a passing hour alone; it takes hold, you perceive, on your whole lifetime. I commend it to the serious and protracted consideration of all, but especially of the young, whose characters are in the forming state, and whose life-work is but just begun. A new style of benevolence the whole Church must exhibit, or the world will never be converted. Sad is it to think of missionary operations curtailed in time past—of children sent back to heathenism—of moral wastes unvisited and unrepaired—of imploring cries for tracts and Bibles, and the living teacher, which the Church has as yet but partially answered. Children of the living God, blood-bought ones, lay these things to heart. Withhold not from the cause you profess to love your silver and gold. It is all the Lord's as you are; for "the earth is his, and the fulness thereof." Stewards of God, you are hasting to your account. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." So abound in this grace of liberality, as in all others, that to each of you Christ shall say, at last, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make the ruler over many things."

DISCIPLINE OF THE FAMILY.

BY REV. ASA D. SMITH, D.D.

LIFE is chiefly important, considered as a scene of probation and of discipline. It is the *Primary School* of our immortal being. Amid all its scenes, the formation of character is constantly going forward. Its circumstances and its institutions, as God appointed them, are all suited to form character aright. Preëminently of this sort is the *household economy*. That it has a thousand tendernesses and joys; that a sweet light is blent even with its lingering shadows; that it is a shield and a covert from the storms of life; that here the weary, world-worn heart finds repose, and a precious balm for its many wounds; in all this, taken by itself, we have but an inferior view of its excellences and utilities. We prize it chiefly as a formative institution, contrived by God for the right development and shaping of our whole being, especially our higher powers.

We may regard it as *a discipline for the mind*. From the curiously constructed organs of sense—the means whereby the outer world first wakes to action the inner—up to the highest of the divinely appointed social arrangements, every thing is adapted to evolve and mature intellect. It is eminently so with the family. Take the conversation of the parents with each other. How *free* is it! and who knows not that the intellect ever works best when most unrestrained? What force is given to its action by the warm atmosphere of *love* that is breathed around it! We all know how easy, comparatively, it is to think, to study, to talk, on whatever subject, with a sympathetic spirit. And how frequent the *opportunities* for such inspiring mental converse! Here are two minds—God has so ordered it—in daily contact; for this very purpose are they separated from the rest of the world. They are at once fellow-pupils and mutual teachers, both inciting and helping each other—the force of each mind as the combined force of both. And what *necessities* of mental effort does the family state impose upon them! I take little notice of their consultations on purely economical matters; though these, in a community like ours, where rising in life is the order of the day, and and rising can be achieved only by thinking, are of no mean account. They have higher matters jointly to consider, and such as task mind to the utmost. What questions are constantly raised in regard to the care and training of their beloved offspring! How, and where, and when, and by whom shall they be taught? What are their unfolding peculiarities of character; and how are these to be wisely met? If a botanist may properly consecrate a lifetime to the study of plants and flowers; if an Agassiz may well devote the full power of his intellect to the insect and reptile tribes, what a subject of thought to the parent the opening, expanding, immortal *minds* around his fireside! What manner of discipline in best for them, what degree of indulgence, what measure of restraint? How shall excrescences be pruned away, and defects supplied? How shall admonition be discreetly given, and reproof be made effectual, and the voice of teaching and of persuasion become most insinuating? These and the like are questions which, if even partially considered, with the momentous consequences of mistake or of failure in view, cannot but powerfully stimulate and exercise the parental mind. They take hold, directly or indirectly, upon all knowledge; they call, in their earthward

and heavenward scope, for all wisdom. Add to all this the thought needful to meet the ten thousand inquiries, often nice and difficult, of juvenile curiosity, and the stern necessity, common to all teaching, of seeing clearly that which you would clearly communicate; and it is further and abundantly evident that the intellect of no faithful parent can be either slumberous or stationary.

It may not be amiss to glance here at the low estimate put by some lordly and self-conceited husbands on the intellectual capacities of woman, and by consequence on her power to enlarge the intellectual privileges of the family. Mutilating in their thought the beautiful picture of Milton, they deem it the office of woman simply

"To study *household* good."

and that of the lowest sort. Distrusting her judgment, or improperly limiting her sphere, they are chary of confiding to her matters of grave concernment, especially of exercising her intellect and benefiting their own by consultations on any difficult out-door problem. They either seek needed counsel elsewhere, or rest in their own fancied sagacity. It would be worse than in vain to meet such error insisting that the structure and the habitudes of mind are in both sexes precisely the same. As well insist that there is no difference in physical structure. As well contend that the Venus de Medici should be shaped and finished like the stalwart Apollo. We receive, of course, the truth, that the woman is, in some sense, the "weaker vessel." Her mind, like the form in which it dwells, seems suited to the quiet, the gentle, the beautiful, rather than the rough, the stormy, the bold, the impetuous. She was made to lean on a stronger arm; it is fitting she should leave to that arm the stern and perilous work from which her peaceful and loving spirit would naturally recoil. But does it follow thence that her intellect is of little avail to the domestic circle, or that it may not be profitable to the head of that circle, in his profoundest musings and questionings in regard to his out-door activities, responsibilities, and perils? Why, the very fact the cast of her mental powers is peculiar, may render them the more that serviceable; they may be, as touching a given case, the very complement of his; they may supply just that which was lacking. We are quite inclined to the opinion expressed by one of our most distinguished jurists, that "there are very few evils to which a man is subject, that he might not avoid, if he would converse more with his wife, and follow her advice." A thousand biases may the husband's mind receive amid the jostling crowd, from which the wife is free. She takes comparatively a fresh view of things. She has a certain nice perception of proprieties, moreover, a sort of æsthetical sagacity, and an unsophisticated common sense, not a little serviceable in disposing of many a grave question, not a little helpful to the right training of intellect.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 3. Vol. XXVI] MARCH, 1852. [Whole No. 303.

SERMON DLXVII.

BY REV. DUNCAN KENNEDY, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE NORTH DUTCH CHURCH, ALBANY, N. Y.

THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

"I magnify mine office."—Rom. xi. 13

No two names can be found, designating the same person, that suggest wider extremes of moral character than Saul the persecutor and Paul the apostle. The announcement of the former presents to the mind the embodiment of some of the most repulsive elements of depraved humanity; and he who bears it stands before us a cruel bigot, a bitter reviler, a bold blasphemer, whose concentrated energies are devoted to the single work of making "havoc of the Church," sustained by an intensity of malignant feeling, which is constantly "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the disciples of the Lord. At the mention of the latter, the painful vision becomes instantly dissolved, and the mind is contemplating the character of one who, possessed of the highest attributes of sanctified humanity, of enlarged charity, unwavering perseverance, and unbounded love to God and man, is preaching the "faith which he once destroyed."

Here is, indeed, a wonderful contrast. Well may we ask how the mighty transformation was effected. And it is no less a dictate of reason than of Scripture to reply, What power but that which is absolutely infinite—which at first called the earth out of nothing, and from the shapeless void evoked light, and order, and beauty, could subjugate and harmonize the fierce and warring elements that had controlled, with such fearful authority, this mighty and rebellious spirit? In the simple story of the journey to Damascus are given the details of this moral revolution; and in the light that shone about him, "above the brightness of the

sun," and in the "voice" that spoke to his inmost being, we detect the invincible agency by which Saul the persecutor became Paul the apostle. The ferocity of the lion has given place to the gentleness of the lamb. The heart, once the seat of the most violent passions,—pride, cruelty, malignant hate,—has become the altar from which ascends the hallowed incense of the tenderest emotions, the holiest affections—humility, pity, universal love. He is henceforth engaged in a work different from that which had before engrossed his powerful energies; a work corresponding to the blessed change that had passed upon him. Called to be an apostle, to bear the tidings of salvation to his fellow-men, he girded himself for the glorious enterprise, and, with unflagging devotion and heroic courage, endured every hardship, encountered every danger, bearing to the last the "testimony of a good conscience" and the smiles of an approving God. It is from the lips of such an one, while suffering the contempt of the learned, the scorn of the great, and the opposition of all, that we hear the animating exclamation, "I magnify mine office."

The word "magnify," employed to express the qualities of an object or pursuit, conveys the idea of something highly esteemed, exalted, honourable, glorious. And this is the estimate which Paul put on the office he sustained as a minister of Jesus Christ. In the deep convictions of his sanctified spirit, that office was invested with such true moral dignity, such unrivalled excellence, such surpassing honour, that, instead of yielding to depression, or shrinking with conscious shame before the enemies of the cross, he, on the contrary, cordially exulted in his calling; and in the contemplation of its divine appointment, its elevated relations, and its ample resources, he never failed to gather strength for the duties it imposed, and courage for the trials it occasioned.

And sure I am, my brethren, that by all who justly apprehend the nature of the ministry of reconciliation, the language of the apostle cannot be regarded as extravagant, but as containing words of truth and soberness.

To meet the spirit of the occasion,* I have selected as the theme of my discourse, THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY, suggested by the brief but sententious passage before us—"*I magnify mine office.*"

The dignity of the Christian ministry may be seen by contemplating—

The authority by which it acts;
The object which it contemplates;
The means which it employs;
The aids which are pledged to it.

---

* Inauguration of Rev. William H. Campbell, D.D. as Professor of Biblical Literature in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Dutch Church, New-Brunswick, N. J.

I. The authority by which it acts ;

That the Christian ministry has had its origin in an appointment directly from Heaven, it were folly for any to question, who bow to the teachings of revelation. This claim has been asserted from the beginning, and in not a single instance has it ever been modified or relinquished. We conclude, as by intuition, that it pertains to God alone to institute an office, the approprate functions of which have exclusive reference to spiritual duties and relations. This prerogative He has ever exercised in all the appointments of His kingdom of grace, and its record is found in the history of every dispensation of religion.

The first who ever reared an altar and presented an oblation was, doubtless, the common progenitor of our race ; and, as no dictate of reason could have led him to suppose that the streaming blood of an immolated victim could expiate the guilt of his soul, we must conclude that he acted under the sanction of a divine command. The paternal and sacerdotal functions were thus for a time united. And when, at a subsequent period, the family relation became expanded into the wider circle of the state or commonwealth, the patriarch united in himself the prerogatives of both king and priest, as coördinate functions and powers.

There was thus, under the earliest dispensations of religion, associated with priestly office, something dignified and venerable ; and, as a divine appointment, there was obviously a sacredness inseparable from the person of him who in the character of intercessor, and as a constituted medium between the visible and the invisible, stood officially nearer to the Divinity than did the rest of the people.

At a still later period—among the nation of Israel—the institution of the priesthood became more clearly defined, war restricted to a single tribe, and made hereditary in the family of Aaron. The solemn dignity and awful sacredness with which it became henceforth invested, are seen in the imposing circumstances that accompanied its appointment at the base of Sinai, in the minuteness of detail that marked its elaborate and complicated ritual, and the stern jealousy with which it was guarded against the intrusion of any who might profanely covet its prerogatives.

Yet this system, appointed as it was by divine authority, was nevertheless designed to answer only a temporary purpose. It was too ceremonial and material, too carnal and sanguinary, for a perpetual or ultimate institution. It was felt by the wise and holy of the people themselves, that the sacerdotal office, though the centre of their hopes, venerable and glorious as it was, was but typical of another and higher order of things. It was felt by the pious Jew that the blood of his numberless victims had no inherent power to put away sin, and that the fragrance of his incense, floating perpetually toward heaven, could not commend his imperfect prayers to a holy God. He knew that these only

prefigured another altar, another sacrifice, and another priesthood, and looked forward in faith and hope to the time when revolving years should usher in the promised Messiah. It was the same conviction, begotten, doubtless, by some partial communion with the Jewish Scriptures, that led the Grecian sage, with a faith stronger than his philosophy could inspire, to utter the memorable declaration, that, without a messenger from Heaven itself, man could never discover nor pursue the path of duty. The hope of the Israelite was at length realized, and the oracular dream of the pagan philosopher fulfilled. From the mysterious abode of the Eternal, across the hitherto impassable gulf that separates the visible from the invisible, came at last the Celestial Messenger, the Divine Teacher, the "great High priest of our profession." He came to execute the sacerdotal office in the mysterious union of the human and divine natures; the victim was Himself; the objects, the guilty inhabitants of this world; and the interested and benefitted spectators, "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers."

The dignity of such a priest, the awful grandeur of such a sacrifice, what mind can conceive, what language express? And yet it is from this Great High Priest, from the essential divinity of his nature, from the unspeakable glory of his mediatorial office, that the dignity of the ministerial character is derived, as to the supreme authority by which it executes its high and solemn functions.

I say not that the ministry of the New Testament is in all respects identical with that of the Old. There is now no official earthly priesthood, for the one great sacrifice has been offered "once for all;" there is now no visible altar, no ritual ceremonial, no outward incense. And yet I do say, that as a divinely appointed agency, to meet the spiritual wants of the world, the ministry is not peculiar to the Christian dispensation. The ministry, and, in its most important attributes, the *Christian* ministry, too, has existed under every revelation of the gospel as the medium of spiritual intercourse between Heaven and earth. Change of names, or of forms, or of outward service, does nothing to disturb what is strictly essential to the great ministerial function, nor to mar the integrity of that gracious system in which it has ever held an indispensable place.

The last and highest type of this order of human agency, however, has been established by the authority of "*God manifest in the flesh.*" Hence it is recorded, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men; . . . and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." The first two of these orders were obviously extraordinary and temporary; and hence, with the close of the canon of inspiration, when prophets had declared the will of God to its completion, and apostles had rendered ample

testimony to the resurrection, there was no longer need of the exercise of their peculiar functions, and they were consequently suspended. Only the last two—"*evangelists*," together with "*pastors and teachers*"—can with any show of reason be regarded as ordinary and perpetual; and these constitute, really and truly, the ministry of the present dispensation. To this ministry, the commission and promise which Christ gave to his disciples originally, remain applicable and efficient, in perpetuity; and these gifts of the august Founder of this ministry, invest it with an essential and relative dignity, that attaches to no other existing human agency.

The source of our authority, then, is God; the charter of our rights, prerogatives, and powers, bears the signature of Heaven! And hence, also, the appropriateness of the designation—"*ambassadors for Christ.*" How sublimely expresive of unequalled honor! Earthly ambassadors are called to represent the person and guard the interests of the courts by whom they are appointed. The minister of Christianity is an ambassador of Christ, a representative on earth of the august court of the God of Heaven. And as the ambassadors of this world partake of the dignity of that authority whose high commission they bear, so has the minister of Jesus reflected upon him the honor and glory of him who is King of Zion.

> "There stands the messenger of truth; there stands
> The legate of the skies! His theme divine,
> His office sacred, his credentials clear."

Let me not be charged with an undue estimate of the office on which I speak. I make a distinction between the office itself and the earthen vessel to which this treasure of the gospel is committed. In myself I am nothing. I am sorrowfully conscious of manifold defects and infirmities. But, however lightly I may and must esteem myself, still I know that things, common and mean in themselves, acquire unspeakable excellence and importance from association and destiny; and looking, therefore, at my heavenly credentials, and tracing my commission to its high and exclusive source, I can hold up my head, for I know I am speaking on behalf and acting under the authority of the God of the universe! This it is that exalts my vocation; and this it is that justifies every minister of Christ, however weak and imperfect in himself, in shouting the exclamation of the apostle, "*I magnify mine office.*"

II. The dignity of the Christian ministry may be seen, in the second place, by considering, *The objects it contemplates.*

Time will allow me to speak of but few of these, and such only as have reference to the present and future welfare of man. In all the departments of man's *social* condition, we discover ample proofs of the salutary influence which the minister is fitted to

exert. Our own observation, as well as the voice of history and the deductions of reason, bears ample testimony on this point. Select a community in any part of the world, where is found an enlightened and faithful ministry, and compare it with any other where the voice of the herald of salvation has not been heard, and the mighty contrast that obtains between the social and moral condition of the two must be decisive of the salutary influence of this sacred institution. In the one case, sobriety, virtue, intelligence, and prosperity, will be visible; in the other, disorder, vice, ignorance, and degeneracy will be the predominant elements. Let the functions of the ministry be suspended, in the most orderly society around you, and the Sabbath will no longer be regarded; let the Sabbath be abolished, and the most efficient restraint upon human depravity is taken away, and the most powerful barrier to the progress of anarchy, social and moral, is at once destroyed.

There is no system of philosophy adequate to arrest this downward tendency of fallen humanity. Systems, I know, have been devised, and no age has been more prolific in such schemes than the present; but all have failed to accomplish what they promised. The very best of them, so far from exerting any really elevating and purifying influence upon the heart, have been found only powerful agents in increasing its blindness and depravity. They may have modified, to some extent, the grosser forms of vice, but they have only refined them into more pervasive and destructive elements of degradation and ruin.

The influence of the pulpit upon the *intellectual* condition of man, is a subject worthy of profoundest thought of all who are lovers of their kind. If you trace the progress of human knowledge in all the diversified relations of the arts and sciences, you will unquestionably find that the source of its reality, its depth, its comprehensiveness, is the Bible. But whence came the Bible, and how is its influence rendered most practically beneficial? It came from God, it is true; but it came through the medium of the ministry of holy men, who spake and wrote as "they were moved by the Holy Ghost." There is a sense, then,—a most important sense,—in which the Bible was written *by* the ministry as well as *for* it; in which the ministry sustains to that sacred volume the relation of *author* as well as *preacher;* and the latter of these is as important in its place, for the accomplishment of the objects of divine benevolence toward this world, as the former. And wherever the Bible, unclasped and unchained, has kept its place in the pulpit, and the man of God has been permitted to proclaim its contents to the people in simplicity and godly sincerity, intellect has received its highest impulses, and the energies of the spiritual nature have been aroused to their noblest exertions. There is no agency under heaven that can bear with so much power upon the convictions and motives of humanity as the ministry of the gospel.

Compared with the attainments of the human mind, under the influence of Christianity, all its achievements amid the most favorable auspices of paganism are light and trivial. Compare the progress of the world, during the four thousand years that preceded the Advent, with its progress during the less than two thousand that have since elapsed, and tell me what are the practical fruits of the aggregate wisdom of the former, compared with those of the latter period? What, for the most part, but childish hypotheses, vague speculations, elaborate triflings? I have no disposition to deprecate the intellect of the sages of antiquity. In painting and sculpture, in poetry and eloquence, they doubtless attained a distinguished position. I only mean to say, that their highest attainments in mental, moral and physical science were comparatively insignificant, and in their influence for the elevation and purity of the people, almost powerless. Long before the apostle Paul had begun to preach to the Gentiles the doctrine of the cross, philosophers of various sects and countries had published their diversified systems of ethics and religion; but between the most sincere and distinguished of them all, there was a constant conflict of opinion. Upon no one point of real importance was there any substantial agreement. Much was uttered concerning the "spirit that is in man," and its innate longings after happiness; but they were never able to analyze its mysterious powers, or satisfy the desires which they consciously cherished. They were ignorant of the nature of good and evil, and disagreed even as to the divine existence. If they cherished hopes of the immortality of the soul, they were continually haunted by the most painful misgivings. Of the resurrection of the body they had not the slightest conception, and upon the region beyond the grave there rested the veil of an impenetrable darkness! It was reserved for teachers mightier than those of the Academy or the Lyceum to proclaim to the world those great principles upon which its elevation, purity, and glory are made to rest. It was the prerogative of the fishermen of Galilee, though in a sense different from what was originally charged upon them, to "turn the world upside down." And the intellectual and moral revolutions that every where marked their course, gave a sublime attestation to the mighty power they were appointed to wield. From that period the human mind received an impulse which has carried it on in a course of progressive development to the present hour, and which will never be impeded nor arrested while the pulpit continues to exert its legitimate influence upon the nations of the earth.

The great principle of the inductive philosophy by which such sublime discoveries have been made, serving to improve so greatly the condition of human existence, and, as it were, enlarging the boundaries of the universe, was not *invented* by Bacon, though it is connected with his name. It was only *discovered* by

him where it had always existed—in the Bible—and applied to the investigation of the laws of nature. The ministry of Christ had long, had always been familiar with it; for all its instructions had from the beginning been based upon and deducted from the authentic and incontrovertable facts of divine revelation. The honor, therefore, does not belong primarily to the coronet of Bacon, but is reflected to him from the crown of the ministry of Jesus.

There is not a spot on the map of the world, on which this ministry has exerted its legitimate influence, where the human mind has not steadily advanced in the scale of intelligence, and sought to realize the august destiny of its rational and immortal nature. And no where has there been a retrocession in these onward movements, no where has darkness at any time returned upon the minds of the people, where "gross darkness" had not first enveloped those who ministered at the altars of religion. The gloom of the middle ages had never found a place in the history of the world, had not the Bible been first closed, and its authorized expounders proved recreant to their high and solemn responsibilities.

In like manner must it be said that the ministry of the gospel constitutes a most *essential element in the progress of civilization.* The science of government, the theory of civil and religious liberty, are properly understood and appreciated only where the pulpit is true to its glorious mission. I cannot enter into any analysis of this point, though the field is both ample and inviting. Suffice it to say, there is not now, and there never has been, a nation on earth possessing or valuing rational freedom, among whom the ministry of Christ has not exerted its benign influence. Christianity has effected, in this respect, entire and most salutary revolutions, wherever its principles have been faithfully inculcated, thus not only meliorating the theory of general government, but renovating and rendering congenial and healthful the whole system and details of social life.

It is true, then, not only in poetry, but also in plain prose, that

> ——"The pulpit in the sober use
> Of its legitimate peculiar powers,
> Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
> The most important and effectual guard,
> Support, and ornament of virtue's cause."

But to the ministry of the gospel appertains still higher honors, as it is appointed to confer yet greater benefits on the world. Were the good which Christianity achieves on behalf of man limited to temporal relations only; were its principles, which have the greatest certainty as demonstrated truths; which form the noblest subjects of contemplation; which refine the taste, restrain the passions, and purify the heart; which curb the selfishness of communities, and establish the most elevated social

polity among the great brotherhood of nations; were these limited in their influence to the narrow sphere of the present life, even then Christianity were indeed worthy the admiration, the homage, the devotion of the world. But these benefits, notwithstanding their intrinsic value, are trifling considerations in comparison with others. The gospel has to do preëminently with man's spiritual nature, and has a direct bearing upon interests that affect his eternal destiny.

That the moral world is in a fallen, alienated, and lost condition, is a truth attested as well by individual consciousness, and the records of universal history, as by the testimony of revelation In his depravity, the revolted creature is conscious of insecurity, and the irrepressible monitions of conscience beget painful anxieties and fears, which no instructions from the oracle of nature have adequate power to allay. No ray of mercy from the throne of God has penetrated to the dark and disordered spirit; and his inmost being is constantly disturbed by premonitions of judgment, and the dreadful forebodings of eternal sorrow. It is in reference to this condition of humanity, that the command is given to the ministry of Christ, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And, in obedience to this command, sustained by the authority and animated by the spirit of its glorious Author, the ministry goes forth on its benevolent mission. It preaches the gospel—the gospel as a *source of light*, making known a new element in the character of God—an element of mercy, And while it represents human guilt in all its dark and dread atrocity, and denounces against it the displeasure of the Most High, it at the same time points to Calvary as the source of expiation, and the medium and pledge of a full and eternal pardon. It preaches the gospel as a *source of power*, by which the bondage of depravity is broken, the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive is made free. It preaches the gospel as a source of *consolation*, by which the spirit is sustained and cheered amid all the trials of life, till death itself falls a conquered monster at his feet, and he is away to the bosom of his Father and his God.

And I ask, must not the instrumentality that stands connected with such glorious results as these, be of all others the most dignified and important? It is the province of this agency, and of none other, to stand at the very fountain-head of all grace, and to proclaim to the entire world, as the representative of the Divinity, that glorious device of mercy, which is emphatically "the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation." It is the prerogative of the minister, *officially and with authority*, to take his place on the summit of Calvary, and from amid the effulgent glory by which it is crowned, to preach the cross,—not the wood of the cross, not the figure of the cross, but the doctrine of the cross; to preach the mercy of Him by

whose blood the cross was stained; to make known the promise which on the cross was sealed, the redemption which on the cross was achieved, the new and better covenant which on the cross was ratified, and that glorious and powerful influence which goes forth from the cross to enlighten, regenerate, and save the world. And tell me, does not he hold a most sublime position, and does not an awful dignity attach to his vocation, who is thus called to study, to expound, to proclaim this amazing theory of grace, which not only contributes so much to man's present good, but which, operating upon the highest elements of his being, transforms his spiritual relations, changes his spiritual appetences, elevates his spiritual condition, and ultimately glorifies his spiritual nature? Surely there is infinite propriety and reason in the rapturous exclamation of the apostle, "*I magnify mine office.*"

III. We see the dignity of the ministry, *thirdly*, by the contemplating the *means which it employs.*

Though several agencies might be mentioned, having a combined and concurrent influence in accomplishing the objects of the ministry, yet there is one that holds such a pre-eminence above all others, that we shall confine our attention to it alone; it is TRUTH—"*the truth as it in Jesus.*" This is the "sword of the spirit," in wielding which, the ministry is, instrumentally, to achieve the conquest of the world, It is appointed to expound, illustrate, and enforce the entire system of Revelation. And what grand and sublime disclosures of truth are there made! How comprehensive and profound, how noble and soul-stirring the themes there presented for investigation; The being and attributes, the works and government of God; the apostasy and the depravity of man; the dispensation of mercy for his recovery and salvation; the incarnation and resurrection of the Redeemer; the mission of the Spirit; the regeneration of the soul, its immortality and its endless destiny! These are glorious subjects, embracing in their mighty sweep eternity past and eternity to come; all that is mysterious in God, all that is interesting in man! all that is attractive in Heaven, all that is terrible in Hell; and involving considerations ever fitted alternately to attract and appal, to awe with reverence and thrill with joy!

There are features that mark the truth which the ambassador of Christ is appointed to proclaim as the means of the world's regeneration, that incontestibly prove its adaptedness to this work.

It is *infallable* truth. The most highly prized productions of men are marred by pervading imperfections. But the Author of Revelation is pre-eminently the "God of truth." He dwelleth in light, and hath no fellowship with darkness. And as the beam partakes of the highest purity of the source whence it emanates, the message which the ministry is appointed to pro-

claim, must be light, as its source is light, and in it is no darkness at all.

It is *comprehensive* truth; and in this respect meets all the demands of the human intellect. Even those truths indicated by the volume of nature, stand out upon the page of Revelation in bolder relief; while others are there developed, concerning which the oracle of nature is utterly silent. Nature knows nothing of a system of grace, and consequently, however her teachings may be adapted to instruct, they are not adequate to save.

It is truth characterized by *simplicity*. It is based upon facts,—facts susceptible of the most ample proof, and on a level with the capacity of all. Here grandeur and beauty, simplicity and sublimity, are so inimitably combined and harmonized, that while it furnishes the profoundest instruction to the sage, it may at the same time be apprehended, appreciated, and loved by the child.

It is truth no less distinguished for its *harmony with the convictions of reason*. In nothing is violence done to any conclusion reached by a legitimate process of rational investigation. And though, as in nature, there are parts of the great system of revealed truth, that are above and beyond the grasp of reason, there are none that are contrary to it. There are none, bowing to which in reverent submission, human reason is not elevated and honored.

And I add, also, that the teaching of the gospel message harmonizes no less fully with the *analogy of nature*. Indeed, the progressive developments of science in all ages, have served only to give additional illustration and confirmation to the truths of Scripture. Nature has never spoken one word in opposition to Revelation. There is not a star that shines in the deep vault of heaven, there is not an insect that floats in the radiance of the summer's sun, there is not a flower that breathes its fragrance upon the air, there is not a rock that has its place in the deep-laid foundations of the earth, but gives a distinct and obvious confirmation to the utterances of Revelation. These two great sources of truth cannot be in conflict with each other; and when their testimony is properly interpreted, their mutual harmony establishes the claims of both to the same divine and glorious authorship.

Such then is the great instrumentality which the ministry is to employ in the work assigned to it. It is *truth*; truth in the strength of its principles—truth in the grandeur of its discoveries—truth in the power of its motives—truth revealed in the Bible, corroborated in nature, and illustrated in every department of the mental, moral, and physical universe. It is this instrumentality that the preacher of the gospel is to bring to bear upon the minds and hearts of his fellow-men, and by

which he is to labor for their salvation. To investigate, explain, and inculcate *truth*, is the great business of his life; this is his "calling of God," and to this he is to devote all the energies of his being.

And if, in passing, I might pause to note an inference that forces itself upon the mind, I would say, that if the relation which the ministry sustains to the truth of God be distinguished for its dignity, it is no less distinguished for its *responsibility*. If the preacher be thus constituted the expounder of truth to the world, is it not his imperative duty to become himself familiar with its teachings? The science of theology is of all others the most profound, and consequently demands the best mental qualifications, as it furnishes scope for the highest order of intellectual endowments. And yet the impression rests upon many minds, that the work of the ministry requires but little ability and little qualification. And it too often happens that when the candidate for this holy office leaves the theological school, he partially, if not wholly, abandons those habits of close investigation and critical research which he was taught there to cultivate. And the consequences resulting from such a course are too obvious to be mentioned.

It is a common remark, that education, properly so called, is the business of the life; that the student, when leaving the halls of science, instead of abandoning study, and resting in inglorious satisfaction, as if he had already attained or were already perfect, should be constantly incited by a thirst for knowledge—an "appetite that grows by what it feeds on"—to prosecute his investigations, employng former acquisitions as the means of making still higher attainments. And if this be true of those engaged in secular studies and pursuits, with how much greater emphasis must it apply to the student of the sacred oracles, the accredited teacher of his fellow men in the sublime mysteries of Christianity! Does it not devolve upon such an one to bring to his high duties, not only zeal, sincerity, and faith, but also the utmost force of his intellect, illumined by all the light which the ever-expanding circle of knowledge can diffuse?

If God has condescended to give to the world a written revelation of his will, and has, by a protracted miracle, preserved that sacred depository of truth uncontaminated from age to age, must it not be the duty and privilege of the authorized expounder of the Sacred Scriptures to be able at all times to go to the original record, and there learn "what is the mind of the Spirit," in the very language which the Holy Ghost has employed? If it be deemed so important that the productions of the poets, historians, and orators of antiquity should be studied in the garb in which they invested their sentiments, as they came fresh and glowing from the inspirations of genius; is it too much to ask, that the same amount of labor should be brought to bear upon

the Book of books, assisted by those ample means and appliances which biblical literature and collateral studies are enabled to furnish.

It has been said, indeed, that a very limited acquaintance with Scripture is sufficient to answer the great purpose of the soul's conversion, and therefore, that the minister is not called upon to engage in such profound investigations of the sacred record.

But, granting the premises to be true, are we to pause at the mere point of conversion? Is not the edification, the enlargement, the elevation of the regenerated spirit, a most distinguished privilege and a most commanding duty? Are not expanded views, solemn impressions, transcendant motives needed, that the soul may be properly educated for its high destiny? And whence can these be derived so readily and successfully as from the deep things of Revelation? The gospel is indeed fitted to bless the ignorant, and guide him on the way to heaven; but it is unspeakably more influential, and a thousand-fold more attractive to him who has become deeply versed in its profound and solemn mysteries. The material firmament would reflect the same light and shed the same genial influence, though every eye regarded it but as a mere canopy, designed only to curtain the globe we inhabit, and though every mind that contemplated it were ignorant of the gorgeous retinue of worlds that sweep through its limitless expanse. Yet, when, by the aid of astronomy, the awful depths of immensity are penetrated, and the mind is led to gaze with an enlarged and strengthened vision upon the wonders that rise from the fathomless abyss, are we to say that no real good is derived, that no substantial benefit is experienced? When those dazzling points that stud the evening sky—once scarcely noticed except with childish curiosity—become enlarged into majestic spheres, and orbs before unseen and unknown, stand out, inconceivable in number, in magnitude and effulgence, how does the soul become impressed and awed by such sublime demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and grandeur of the Creator; and where else can it be found in an attitude so fitted to sympathize in the language of the Psalmist, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; in wisdom hast thou made them all?" And thus it is with the more glorious firmament of Revelation. How is faith strengthened, and reverence deepened, and devotion brightened, when its mysterious depths are explored with diligence, meekness, and prayer. When that which was before but dimly visible, is seen to shine with inconceivable lustre; and that which was before contracted, expands into illimitable dimensions; and orbs of truth before undiscovered, burst forth on every side, filling the field of spiritual vision with the radiance of a steady and unutterable glory, how irre-

sistibly is the soul impelled to exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And how does it seem to realize the fulfilment of the apostle's prayer, that it may "comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth of the love of God, which passeth all knowledge; and be filled with all the fulness of God."

But we advance still farther, and say that it is both the privilege and duty of the minister, so far as circumstances will allow, to cultivate an acquaintance with the progressive discoveries of natural science, as furnishing appropriate and important aids in the development and illustration of Scripture. Far be it from me to insinuate that Revelation is susceptible of improvement;—it is a perfect system. I only mean that it is capable of being better understood, and that every advance of science may be made instrumental of giving greater distinctness and impressiveness to many of its truths. Creation is just as truly a divine revelation to man as Scripture itself. They are kindred volumes. Christianity does not abrogate—it only completes and confirms the teachings of natural religion. It does not demand that we should shut our eyes to the light that is shed around us in the wonders of the earth and the glory of the heavens; that we should steel our hearts to all the emotions that rise within us, and the impressions that come to us from without; that we should close our ears against the myriad voices of universal history, of daily providence, of unfolding science. These significant utterances Christianity recognizes and corroborates, and where they shed no light, she diffuses a benignant effulgence. Christianity thus bears an obvious and intimate relation to the vast and ever-expanding domain of science, and is capable at once of illustrating and being illustrated by all the works and ways of God. Both therefore should be studied together, as continued commentaries upon each other; and the minister of the gospel who disparages the claims of science by shutting his eyes to its light, is scarcely less reprehensible than the student of nature who refuses to bend his reason to the evidences of Christianity.

The ambassador of Jesus has nothing to fear while thus communing with God, through the medium of the material universe. The religion he proclaims has always courted such investigations, and prospered in their results. It is in the very sunlight of science that religion flourishes best; and the higher that glorious orb ascends towards his meridian splendor, the stronger does the Christian Temple appear in its foundations, the more beautiful in its design, the more harmonious in its proportions, and the more grand in the entireness of its structure! And what an accumulation of dignity gathers around the office of

him whose prerogative it is thus to stand by these two great sources of all knowledge, and proclaim the truth and glory of Him who reigns over both—the "only wise God and Saviour!" "*I magnify mine office.*"

IV. We contemplate the dignity of the Christian ministry, in the last place, in *the aids that are pledged to it.*

Among these we specially note the *Spirit* and *Providence* of God. What has already been said, sufficiently indicates the estimate we place upon a well-trained ministry. But in the success of the gospel, we are constantly warned against attaching *undue* importance to any amount or fitness of mere *instrumentality.* Though God works by means, and usually renders those most effectual which are best adapted to the ends they are appointed to accomplish, still, let it never be forgotten, that a higher power than any instrumentality can possess, is necessary to render the Word effectual unto salvation. Whatever the ministry may have accomplished for the good of the world, it has accomplished only as a *secondary agency;* the Spirit of God, pledged in its efficacious influence to the ministry, has been the efficient cause of all. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase." "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The ambassador of Christ may labor diligently and faithfully, yet will he "spend his strength in vain, and his labor for naught," unless his ministrations be accompanied with "*power from on high.*" His understanding may be profound, his logic convincing, and his pathos overwhelming; he may "speak in the tongues of men and of angels:" he may press into his service all the force of theological erudition, and all the resources of science and art; he may seem by his mighty grasp of thought to command a willing tribute from every department of the empire of truth; and yet, if he preach not "*in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,*" he will be but "*as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*" It is not within the reach of finite agency to convert a soul. There is in that soul a region of darkness which human genius cannot illume; a domain of depravity, over which human learning can throw no saving influence: a principle of entrenched evil which no force of human eloquence can ever extirpate, and which will continue to maintain a gloomy and successful resistance till the voice of God proclaim its tyranny at an end! Wit may amuse the fancy, rhetoric may gratify the taste, logic may convince the understanding, and pathos may move the sensibilities; but it is the power of the invincible Spirit alone that can shake the citadel of the heart, and win the soul unto God;

It is the omnipotent energy that stands pledged in perpetuity to the ministry of reconciliation. And how distinguished and glorious is this assurance! When, depressed in view of his own weakness and the greatness of his work, the humble am-

bassador of the cross is constrained to ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?"—he finds, in the promised presence and efficiency of the Spirit, an answer, ever ready and full and cheering, "My sufficiency, is of God." Is there any thing the mind can contemplate, more truly sublime and beautiful than this alliance of the weakness of humanity with the strength of Divinity, thus constituting the ministry associate laborers with the eternal God in the regeneration of the world!

But the *Providence* of God is also pledged to aid in the same great enterprise. Christ, the author of the Gospel and the founder of the ministry, is "Head over all things to the Church." Not only by him were all things created, but by him also are they sustained and controlled and made subservient to the accomplishment of his purposes of grace. "The government is upon his shoulders," and He so directs the affairs of earth, that every event which affects persons or communities, every revolution in the world of matter or mind, every commotion that agitates Church or State, is an element of power under his control, and moves in his train to give present success and final triumph to the ministry of reconciliation,

This direction and tendency of things may not be always obvious to our limited comprehension. We can see but parts of what constitutes the mighty whole, and are often constrained to exclaim, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." We cannot understand how events seemingly the most adverse are made to move the wheels of the chariot of salvation. But so it is. And though darkness frequently enshroud his operations, and his purposes seem to develope through diverse and circuitous channels, yet they at length meet and terminate in the accomplishment of that whereunto they are sent. And though his ways be oftentimes in the great waters, and those waters be frequently agitated by storms, still the Son of God is upon the troubled element, and here and there a billow bending under his footsteps, and here and there a wave ruffled by his movement, reveal to us an Almighty energy that has power to control the tempest, and, when his purposes demand it, to say, "*Peace, be still!*"

Such, then, are the aids secured to the ministry in the work to which it is called. And in view of the divine condescension in thus signalizing the agency of imperfect men by lending to it the resources of his energy, the spirit of the holy apostle, dilated with sentiments too sublime for utterance, could only exclaim in the impotence of overwhelming adoration, confidence, and joy, "*I magnify mine office.*"

The same pledges, my brethren, belong to us, and they constitute the basis of our confidence and hope in the work in which we are engaged. Away, then, with despondency! Away with fear! He who has instituted the ministry, who has

chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, has made the result to depend on nothing less than his own omnipotence. Then "let the heathen rage, and kings set themselves." His counsels shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. "Lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS," is the standing pledge of the final triumph of the work of the ministry, This is the badge of our office; this the shekinah of our sanctuary; this the "hiding of our power," this the motto upon our banner; and BY THIS WE CONQUER!

SERMON. DLXVIII.

BY REV. A. L. STONE,

PASTOR OF PARK STREET CHURCH, BOSTON, MASS.

PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

"Without God in the world."—EPHESIANS II. 12.

A SOUL without God is like the earth without the sun. Quench in the heavens the orb of day, how dark, dumb, and dead would be the earth below! No flush of morning's rising, no genial heat of high noon, no sunset glory. Darkly would the rivers flow, the brooks complain, and the waves of ocean roll. Hushed all the voices of the groves; shut and scentless the flowers; silenced the sounds of busy labor; chained every foot of man;—and poor stricken Nature would lie cold and mute as a corpse, her great, vital heart slowly ceasing to beat. As the sun is the life and light of the natural world, so is God of the spiritual. Where He is not, there is no true life, no real joy, no abiding peace. Without his presence and friendship, the soul is dark and dead, cold and comfortless. It must be visited by an ever-recurring gloom, foreboding of disaster: a sense of want and dread—afraid of God and his judgments. There may be the short-lived intoxications of pleasure; momentary forgetfulness in the heat of some eager race for the world's prizes; the fitful shining of some delusive hope; but, in the pauses of sober thoughtfulness, the shadow comes back, and night resumes its reign.

I wish to speak to you of this desolate condition; of *what it is;* of its *guilt* and *misery;* that, having gained your convictions thus far, I may urge upon you more importunately the free and full offer in the gospel of the divine love and favor.

What is it to be without God in the world? The question is

asked, not of the dwellers in heathen isles, but here, under the blaze of Christian institutions, the light of a Divine revelation shining through all our homes. What is it for one of you, roofed over and walled in by sanctuary privileges this day, to be "*without God?*" We answer,

I. NEGATIVELY—

1. It is not to be without the *knowledge of God.* That sacred name was called over you in solemn ritual, at the font of baptism; you were taught to lisp it when first you clasped your infant palms in prayer. Looking out with wondering eyes upon earth, its streams and flowers and fruits, and up to the sun, shining in his strength, and the moon and stars, you were told that God made them all. With your earliest schooling, one book was put into your hands with signs of reverence, which you took reverently, as the giver said, "This is God's Book." As your days of young mirth circled round, there came always one day when the tumult of your pastimes was softly hushed, and you set down to learn the nursery rhyme—

> "I must not work, I must not play,
> Upon *God's* holy Sabbath-day."

And then, with burnished face and fresh attire, you were led slowly, checked in the frolic impulses that would make you leap and shout, to the house of God. This has been your education from the cradle. And now the name of God is familiar to you as household words. His greatness, glory, and majesty; his holiness, justice and truth; his eternity and omnipotence; his revealed will given in the old historic record, and in the code of Sinai—nothing of all this is strange to you now. You have looked upon the symbols of the sacramental board, and know their volumed meaning; and have heard many a time over the feast the chant of this thrilling strain: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And in the ordinances of his Word this God has spoken to you, and you have heard and known his voice; and he has called after you by the accents of his providence and his Spirit, and you could not mistake his utterance; and all this for years, for your lifetime past, so that none of you are ignorant of God; and whatever it may be for one of you, in the sense I mean, to be without God, it cannot be that you are without the *knowledge* of God.

2. It is not to be without *the favors of God.* These fall upon you thick and cast as the snow of orchard blossoms in spring. You cannot help your indebtedness to God for life and all its blessings. Whether you acknowledge him, love him, serve him, or not, it must still and ever be true that he made you, that he preserves you, that he bestows all your good things

upon you. The lips that never praise him, he colors with the red hue of health; the eye never lifted to his throne adoring, he opened on this world of light and beauty; the heart cold at the tale of his boundless compassions, he sends to it every pulsation of life and joy. This thought I would have you carry with you, that the man who lives without God is yet an infinite debtor to his providential goodness. He is not without God because God has deserted him and left him an outcast on some barren waste, unvisited by kindness and bounty. He may have been greatly favored with worldly good; all his paths may drop fatness; garner and cup overflow; God at his table, loading it; God at his couch, guarding it; God with his sick, healing them; God in his field, making it fruitful; God in his work, making it prosperous; God with his friends, making them kind; God in his plans, giving him foresight; God in his art, giving him skill; God in his trouble, giving him light; God in his peril, giving him safety; God, in every walk of his life, his benefactor, provider, defender, and constant keeper: all this may be, and yet, and though it heighten inexpressibly the guilt of it, and the wonder of it, it may still be true that this man, so blessed and favored and courted by kindness, ingrate, and blind, and stony-hearted, is living *without God in the world.*

II. AFFIRMATIVELY—

1. It is to be without God *as an object of love and worship.* The term in our text, translated *without God*, is "*Atheoi*," which has its straightest English in the word Atheists. There are two kinds of atheism: one, speculative or theoretical, the other, virtual and practical; one denying the existence of a God, the other ignoring all his claims to the heart. One is blind of mind, looking out upon a world teeming with wonders, instinct every where, in sky, and earth, and sea, with proof of intelligent skill and design, and discerning no evidence, of a Creator; the other is hard of heart, before the full vision of God—unresponsive, unfearing, unloving. Which is the truer, the more real, if not the more literal *atheism?* Which, in the sight of God, is the worse? It is a greater crime stupidly to mistake the demonstration of God's existence, than to admit that he lives and reigns glorious in holiness, and yet pay him no reverence? The practical atheist is one who believes that God is, and yet trembles not; that he is a great King, and yet brings no homage; that his tender mercies are over all his works, and yet offers no thanksgiving; that he will by no means clear the guilty, and yet has no terror; that he will come to judgment, and yet goes smilingly forward toward the great white throne, unawed, and stout in heart. God is seated on the circle of the heavens: the earth is his footstool; his face is veiled with light; adoringly the angelhood cast their crowns before him; his hand moves the worlds in space: this puny mortal beholds,

comprehends, believes; but bows not, worships not, bends no knee, lifts no song; lives, as though God, with all his awfulness, glory, and goodness, were not. Is he not an *atheist?* When does he worship God? Not when the day wakes him—he rises without prayer; not when the night disrobes him—he lies down without prayer; not when his feast is spread—he returns no thanks before he eats. Does he *ever* kneel, does he *ever* say, "*Our Father*," and does he love when he does not worship? Do all his warm affections go up incense-like to the skies? Is the language of his heart and his lips, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire beside thee?" Does any human ear ever hear him say that; does God's ear ever hear it; does his heart ever think it? If he loved God, could he be denied communion with him? But where is his closet? If he loved him, he would love to be like him; for there is no Scripture truer than that *every man is like his God.* If he loved him, he would do his will, for the appeal of the Saviour is unanswerable: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Does he love God? He would love his law, the perfect transcript of his character: he would love his Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; he would love to meditate upon his glorious perfections.

Is there no one of you who studiously and habitually keeps God out of thought? When do you pray to him? When do you show an attachment to him that enthrones him, in your regard, above every object beloved beside, in all the universe? How often do you even think of him? Perhaps when he makes his tempests roar about you; when he speaks in the thunder-volley; when the glance of his eye in the steely lightning flashes across your path; when he lifts your sea-craft on the stormy wave; when he sends death over your threshold; in such approaches, possibly, you think of him, for you cannot help it—you are made afraid at his power: but, oh! do your thoughts cling lovingly, constantly, filially, to his name? Do you not live, for the most part, as though there were "nothing above to excite awe, nothing around to awaken tenderness?" And are you not thus *atheoi*, "*without God* in the world?"

2. It is to be without God *in the plans and toil of life.* Each of you has his labor. Its call breaks your morning slumber; you are seen bending to it in the heat of day. Scarce do you dismiss it from your thought as you press again the pillow. You tax your utmost sagacity; you match all your wit and cunning against other men's in laying your plans. How eager, how busy, how absorbed you are in this hurrying to and fro of every day! For some reason, your very heart is in it. Your interest is unfeigned, cordial, intense. There is nothing like insincerity or lukewarmness in your untiring, heroic devotion to these pursuits. What is the animating principle? What

so inspires and sustains you? What pleasant thought have you as the sweetener of toil, when the beaded drops stands on your brow, and your loins ache, and your eyes are dim? Have you heard the voice out of heaven, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?" Nay, he who lives without God in the world, has shut him out from all life's burdened schemes. God is to have no reverence from all his work. The sustaining nerve of his laborious hours; the pleasant thought that takes the bitterness from his sweat; the grand aim kept before him like the pole-star to the mariner, is not the divine glory in his eating, and drinking, and doing. It is well if his plans do not, in themselves, contravene the will of God; if his creed of morals in buying and selling, and conducting his worldly affairs, do not conflict with that great second law, like unto the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" if his methods of getting and holding property do not cross some one or more of the edicts thundered forth from the Mount of the desert; if he be not secretly or openly a violater of the principles of common honour and honesty. But if he be unimpeachable in matters like these, how truly is he still without God, to have no commanding reference in all this fruitful industry of his years to Him whose steward he is, and who said to him, "Go work to day in my vineyard, and whatsoever is right *I will give you.*"

3. It is to be without God *as a refuge in time of trial.* In the hour of temptation, who is safe if God be not his keeper? I address young men whose way of life in a city like this is a fiery ordeal for virtue and principle, through which, oh! how few pass unscathed; Your natural counsellors, they whose name and lineage you bear, are distant or dead. The siren song of pleasure is in your ear; the vices, robed in gay apparel, court you: your heart is bounding with the quick, hot blood of youth. The home voices—voices of affectionate entreaty, voices of prayer, heard of God in the night-vigils—are afar off; in secrecy and darkness you may walk unwatched whither you will; the chains of perilous companionship are around you, tightening like the coil of serpents; worldly ambition plies you; examples of successful fraud and villany tempt you; on the verge of such abysses you walk, and walk *without God.* When you reel and grow giddy in these slippery places, you have no hand divine to hold by, no closet fortress to retreat to, no shield of faith to cast before you, no God under whose shadowing wings to hide, no spell of invincible potency like this, to bear back the encircling perils: "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth." How will you escape?

And there are times of trial that gather, gloomy and dark, around the path of men of capital and business and great enterprises, whose shocks will drive them from all their moorings if

they be not anchored within the veil. Let the pressure of a commercial crisis come upon them; their confidence in resources, they thought stable, be shaken; one embarrassment crowd close upon the heels of another; loss follow loss; their hopes of gain go by the board; and the desperate struggle commence to keep their head above water, and hold up a name and credit never yet tarnished: what shall help them fight the battle through; what shall rally hope and courage, and renerve the fainting heart with elastic strength? Thus oppressed by care and distress of mind, a man wants supernatural help and comfort, the presence and friendship of God, confidence in an overruling, all-wise, all-merciful Providence, pledged by covenant to bless and succour him. He is not safe without such keeping. His principles are not safe, his judgment is not safe, his reason is not safe. The dear ones under his roof, all dependent upon him, weigh him down in this trial: what will become of them if he sinks in this struggle? His head is perhaps already gray; he cannot begin again at the foot of the hill and climb with the vigour that once braced his limbs. Hope droops with age; and ever as the horizon grows darker, and ruin stares him closer, he trembles on the brink of some great, terrible, final disaster, some rash, guilty act, some hopeless wreck of integrity—perhaps madness. Miserable, miserable man, without God as a refuge in this his extremest need!—And every man has his one chief treasure, which will at some time suffer invasion and drive him to sorest straits. Touch him any where else, and he will keep his fortitude; touch him there, you touch the apple of his eye. One man will bear the loss of any thing but his property; strip him of that, and he cries, like poor Micah against the children of Dan, *Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* Another will bear the loss of property, but cannot bury his children. A third can endure these bereavements, but cannot keep up under the loss of reputation. And in any of these providences that smite down the idol, whither shall the sufferer turn? He has no refuge in God—what hand shall soothe and heal his smart; what star of hope shall guide him through? Such discipline with a good man only brings him nearer to God. The blessings removed are but links taken from the shortening chain that binds him to the Giver; but, falling on the defenseless head of one that hath no ark to shelter him, these storms beat down all his strength, and quite crush him to the earth. O, wretched, perilous lot, to be without God in the griefs and woes, the temptations and cares of life!

4. In the last place: to be without God in the world is to be without him *as the final portion of the soul.* I have spoken of the waves of earthly troubles and calamity, but there is another wave to be encountered: none can escape it; the prosperous, the unfortunate alike must meet it. I see it gathering way; it

so inspires and sustains you? What pleasant thought have you as the sweetener of toil, when the beaded drops stands on your brow, and your loins ache, and your eyes are dim? Have you heard the voice out of heaven, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?" Nay, he who lives without God in the world, has shut him out from all life's burdened schemes. God is to have no reverence from all his work. The sustaining nerve of his laborious hours; the pleasant thought that takes the bitterness from his sweat; the grand aim kept before him like the pole-star to the mariner, is not the divine glory in his eating, and drinking, and doing. It is well if his plans do not, in themselves, contravene the will of God; if his creed of morals in buying and selling, and conducting his worldly affairs, do not conflict with that great second law, like unto the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" if his methods of getting and holding property do not cross some one or more of the edicts thundered forth from the Mount of the desert; if he be not secretly or openly a violater of the principles of common honour and honesty. But if he be unimpeachable in matters like these, how truly is he still without God, to have no commanding reference in all this fruitful industry of his years to Him whose steward he is, and who said to him, "Go work to day in my vineyard, and whatsoever is right *I will give you.*"

3. It is to be without God *as a refuge in time of trial.* In the hour of temptation, who is safe if God be not his keeper? I address young men whose way of life in a city like this is a fiery ordeal for virtue and principle, through which, oh! how few pass unscathed; Your natural counsellors, they whose name and lineage you bear, are distant or dead. The siren song of pleasure is in your ear; the vices, robed in gay apparel, court you: your heart is bounding with the quick, hot blood of youth. The home voices—voices of affectionate entreaty, voices of prayer, heard of God in the night-vigils—are afar off; in secrecy and darkness you may walk unwatched whither you will; the chains of perilous companionship are around you, tightening like the coil of serpents; worldly ambition plies you; examples of successful fraud and villany tempt you; on the verge of such abysses you walk, and walk *without God.* When you reel and grow giddy in these slippery places, you have no hand divine to hold by, no closet fortress to retreat to, no shield of faith to cast before you, no God under whose shadowing wings to hide, no spell of invincible potency like this, to bear back the encircling perils: "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth." How will you escape?

And there are times of trial that gather, gloomy and dark, around the path of men of capital and business and great enterprises, whose shocks will drive them from all their moorings if

BE STILL.

It is often easier to *do* than to *suffer* the will of God. There is a pleasurable excitement in the employment of one's active powers in the service of Christ, a satisfaction in the consciousness of doing good. A little grace, with favoring providence, may make a Christian hero; while abounding grace alone will suffice to make a Christian martyr.

Be still when persecuted and slandered. If unjustly accused, you may regard every epithet of abuse as a badge of discipleship. Your divine Master and his apostles and witnesses were marked in the same way. Then, too, every lie has the seeds of death within it. Let alone, it will die of itself. Opposition may look very formidable: it may seem as though "the mountains were carried into the midst of the sea; the waters thereof roar, and be troubled; the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; but the voice of wisdom cries, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Be still when thwarted in your plans and disappointed in your hopes. You are not responsible for results. If you have sought trustworthy ends by lawful means, and have done, your utmost to attain them, the issue is of divine ordering, and should be no more the subject of murmuring or repining than the changes of the the seasons or the rolling of the spheres. The purpose of God in your loss or disappointment may not be obvious. You may have to content yourself with the thought, "These are but parts of his ways." But the fact that they *are his ways* must hush the soul in quietude under the most trying and mysterious crosses of life. Faith will take up Cowper's song:

> "Behind a frowning providence,
> He hides a smiling face."

Be still under sore afflictions. They are all ordered of God. They are embraced among the "all things" that shall work together for good to them that love God. Murmuring does not lessen, but rather increases the burden of griefs. Submitted too—acquiesced in—sanctified—every sorrow may distil new joys; every affliction may work out "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Many a saint has never experienced the infinite preciousness of the gospel, until the rod of God is upon him. It is when in the vale, with eyes uplifted and the mouth closed—"I was dumb"—that the stars of promise glisten on the spiritual vision, and the Sun of righteousness darts his rays of comfort and holy joy on the stricken soul.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 4, Vol. XXVI] APRIL, 1852. [Whole No. 304.

SERMON DLXIX.

BY REV. HENRY M. FIELD,

PASTOR OF THE CONG. CHURCH, WEST SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

THE INVISIBILITY OF GOD.

The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.—1 Kings viii: 12.

The first fact which shows that there is in all men a religious instinct, is the universal conviction of an Invisible Power. The idea of God, however derived, has extended far as the human race. Despite the ignorance and degradation in which a large part of mankind have been sunk, that belief, the germ of all religious faith and worship, has perpetuated itself through the darkest ages and the most barbarous nations.

But where is God? All men believe in him; yet "no man hath seen God at any time." We discover no huge, mysterious form sweeping through the sky. We hear no voice speaking from the cloud. We call upon Him, with loud cries and prayers, to manifest his presence; but our voices seem to float away, and lose themselves in the eternal silence. In the anguish of disappointment, man begins to waver in uncertainty, to doubt his first convictions, and sometimes, in despair, sinks back into total unbelief.

Certainly here is a great mystery, and it seems to grow darker and darker. The more palpable becomes the fact of God's existence, the greater is the wonder that he should have departed from all sight and hearing of his creatures. Every thing leads to this great mystery—God. He is every where present, but we cannot see him; acting in all, but we cannot detect him. He retires behind his works.

Nor in history has God ever come forth from this darkness.

He has created the world, and sustained it for six thousand years, yet not once has he permitted man to behold him face to face. He appeared to Jacob in a dream, but it was at the top of a ladder far receding into heaven. Moses heard his voice from the burning bush, but the eyes of the pious Hebrew were dazzled by flame. He descended on Sinai to give his law, but thick clouds closed around the mountain's breast. Thus he was enfolded whenever he approached the earth. "He bowed the heavens, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies." At the transfiguration of Christ, the silence of heaven was again broken, but the voice came from an overshadowing cloud.

As the person of the Deity is studiously kept out of sight, so attributes are veiled, and his agency silent. The power of Almighty is indeed attested by the everlasting monuments of creation; yet not in the earth nor heaven do we behold all of God. "Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him; but the thunder of his power who can understand?" Seldom is that power exhibited in a startling or terrific form. Here and there, a voice of thunder or an eye of lightning, discover the mighty force that is working behind the universe. But commonly man is left to take his course through life undisturbed. If, for a moment, convulsed nature awakens an instinctive awe, soon the sun chases away the storm, and the alarmed spirit relapses into its quiet atheism.

The same obscurity rests on all that passes in the mind of God. His counsels are wrapped in inscrutable mystery. Often human curiosity tries to penetrate the secret designs of Heaven, and thus to solve the mystery of our own destiny. But the darkness of the subject baffles every inquiry. All events are at his disposal, yet not one of them can man foretell. He holds our breath in his hands, yet lisps not a word of the time we are to live or die. The future is all light to him, but it is all dark to us.

Even the administration of justice seems slow and obscure. So astounded are we at the frequent prostration of virtue, and the triumph of wrong, that we sometimes doubt if there be a moral Governor of the world. The long delay of punishment exposes the Supreme Judge to ceaseless murmurs and complaint. Yet he hastens not to vindicate his name.

This studied concealment and mystery perplex us. We are fond of accounting for the actions of superior beings by such motives as we find in our own breasts. But this impenetrable reserve and silence is so contrary to that ostentation in man which eagerly vaunts his power, that our philosophy is at fault. Besides, so many objects might be secured by a more direct manifestation of the Almighty. How would the faith of good men be fortified! Oppressed virtue would be raised out of the

dust, and impiety awed from the world. So men reason, and they often wonder that God does not give to every man a direct revelation, which should leave no room for doubt, and work miracles to enlighten every age.

But God's ways are not like ours. While men speculate concerning him, he keeps hid within the veil, retiring into the recesses of his own eternity, beyond the utmost stretch of human thought. There, in those shadowy realms withdrawn, within the temple of eternal silence, overhung by the canopy of everlasting night, stands the throne of God.

It would be presumption to attempt to penetrate this thick darkness where God dwells. We would not even form an imagination of the person of the Deity; nor would we pry too curiously into His designs concerning us. Leaving this fruitless search, we would more reverently seek to satisfy the devout mind, by pointing out several reasons why God thus withdraws from his creatures.

I. One object evidently was to discountenance idolatry.

Educated as we have been in the Divine unity and perfection, it is hardly credible with what infinite labor that simple faith was established in the world. But, in truth, clear, spiritual conceptions of God are among the last attainments of the human mind.

When the intelligence of man first opened to a world of wonders, its impulse was to ascribe every thing to a supernatural agency, and to people the universe with divinities. The simple child of nature beheld with awe phenomena which he could not explain. He saw action in a thousand instances where there was no visible actor. He inferred, therefore, that the world was animated by invisible agents, by spirits, by divinities. Thus he deified almost every living thing. Every spot of interest had its divinity. There was a god of the valleys, and a god of the hills, and some lesser divinity for almost every grove and stream.

After this childhood of the world—this age of poetry, and simple, wondering faith—comes an age of philosophy. Men begin to speculate, to generalize, to form abstractions, to talk of necessity, of fate, and the laws of nature. From the extreme of idol worship the mind passes to the extreme of unbelief. Idolatry and atheism are the two poles of human thought. Between this action and reaction of the human mind, it is the business of Revelation to guide man to the true knowledge of God.

It was the special work of Judaism to expel the crowd of heathen divinities, and to substitute the worship of Jehovah alone.

We cannot understand how great is the fascination of idolatry, where it has seized strong hold of the imagination of a people. It took a course of ages, and the several national calamities,

to break the strange charm among the Jews themselves. It was never effectually done until after a punishment of seventy years' captivity in Babylon. So the pagan nations of our own day may be shown the absurdity of their religions; yet with what astonishing tenacity do they cling to their ancient systems of idol worship!

Now, to replace these multitudinous deities by the altars of the one living and true God, it is almost necessary that he should be unseen. A visible manifestation would inevitably suggest the idea of a local Deity, not of a Being every where present. The place of his apparition would be invested with superstitious sanctity, and the form in which he appeared would become an object of idolatry. Therefore, to guard against such unworthy conceptions, the Divine Being has hidden in impenetrable obscurity, and forbidden his creatures even to make an image of himself.

Thus only can we conceive of the greatness of God. Every visible form is measured by sight. It is only as God is invisible that he can be illimitable. To give to the Deity the bounds of visibility would impose a restraint on our devout conceptions. The idea of God would shut down like a solid firmament, repressing the soul from soaring into infinity.

Hence visible deities, however gigantic and imposing to the eye, are enormous weights upon the human mind. Spirit is turned into matter; the object of worship appeals directly to the senses, but it has no longer power over the imagination. A religion may thus be rendered permanent, but it cannot expand with the mind. Its ideas are all rigid as its gods of stone. They restrict thought, binding it down to deadness of faith, and formality in worship. Thus, for example, Hindooism is a petrified religion; and how it weighs down the life of India! The characteristic of the Hindoo mind is immobility. It is like the civilization of China, a motionless Dead Sea. Not a wave, not a ripple, crosses its surface.

The spirituality of God lifts up this crushing weight, and gives to the human intellect infinite elasticity and scope. Our God is by no bounds confined; at once, "in heaven," "in hell," and far as fly "the wings of the morning." Thus, ever vanishing and reappearing, he keeps beyond our thought; and when men think to have reached the limits of his being, he darts away into the abysses of the universe, that the mind may stretch farther and enlarge itself in the attempt to find its Creator.

True, it is more difficult to apprehend this Omnipotent Being than to look on a huge idol. It requires reflection to conceive of a spiritual object of worship, while the visible Divinity requires none. But how much more quickening is this view when acquired! Instead of an enthroned monarch, [redacted] and finite like ourselves, we have a Power,

vast and wandering air," rolling through all things, and giving life to universal nature.

The march of the human race is slow. For centuries has mankind struggled towards this great truth, that there is but one God for all worlds. But it was worth the labor of thousands of years to establish this faith immovably in the human mind. The unity of God is in religion and philosophy, what the Copernican System is in astronomy. It gives order to all man's knowledge. Here he attains the summit from which he can overlook the universe.

II. God is partially concealed, so as not to overpower the human mind; yet he is partially discovered, so as to excite its attention and wonder, and thus lead it to seek after him.

Man is born in ignorance. He begins with limited ideas and sensible objects, and gropes his way forward. The intellect, like the body, at first must creep. The child must have his crude conceptions, and pass years in attaining to intellectual manhood. The first danger to be avoided is that of overpowering his little mind by too fast and vivid communications. All wise education is tolerant of weakness, and condescends to ignorance. At first, a dim and faint outline of truth is better than the full, broad reality. When a blind eye is opened, it must be kept in a shaded room, and the light be admitted gradually. So, too much knowledge is as dangerous as too little. Many a feeble mind is seriously injured by being brought suddenly into connection with a strong one. The weaker intellect is wholly crushed by the power of the giant. Its individuality is destroyed. Such would be the effect of bringing the human mind into too close contact with the mind of God.

Even for the purpose of studying the Divine Being, it is better that a wide distance intervene between us. We cannot look steadily at the sun. That luminary, which now revives the earth by his warmth, if brought nearer, would destroy all life on the globe. He has to be placed at a distance of ninety-six millions of miles, lest his burning rays should set fire to our planet. So God stands afar off in the heavens, and shines with distant and softened light.

The heart that craves the support of religion, and begins to grope after its Creator, is oppressed by this want of clear knowledge. The firmament is starless, and the earth rests under it in silence and in gloom.

But while we seem thus to be left alone in the night, we find presently that in this darkened universe there is a twilight brightening into dawn. We soon discover a power which, by the very silence and secresy of its operations, arrests and fascinates the mind that loves to watch nature in her course. A man with any faculty of observation can hardly open his eyes, and not be made conscious that there is an invisible agency abroad.

The world is full of life. Animated beings dart through the air and the waters. The conviction of a great soul of the world steals into the mind like the sense of beauty. It is not the result of a process of reasoning so much as an intuitive sentiment. Even unbelief whispers, with hushed voice,

> "The awful shadow of some unseen Power,
> Floats, though unseen, among us."*

Thus God's revelations are all gentle: he does not force himself upon the mind. His object is not to dazzle us with his glory. "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it." He does not illumine the world with blazing comets, but with the mild splendors of morning and evening; with the sun by day, and the moon by night. So unobtrusive is God's goodness. But this delicate and tender agency is more touching to a devout spirit than would be miracles and voices from heaven, because it enters the mind softly and peacefully. Miracles and visions might startle us; but they could not furnish such food for silent meditation and gratitude.

III. The darkness which envelops the Divine Beingwas designed to inspire a religious feeling of mystery and awe, and thus to keep the mind in an attitude of adoration.

Nature is full of mysteries, and therefore religion, whic treats of the highest objects in nature, which, in fact, is a natural history of the invisible world, must include mysteries also. Men find fault with this obscurity. But what would they have? A religion without mystery? Then they will have one that is not true and divine. All that is real and living shoots down into the realm of mystery.

The most obscure subject in the universe is the Supreme Being. The mode of God's existence, like the vital principle in nature, escapes all research or analysis. Nor does religion dispel this obscurity. The flashes of Revelation only make visible the deeper abysses of the Godhead. The form in which the Divine Presence was symbolized in the Shekinah, and in that inner shrine called the Holy of Holies, was such as to give the worshipper the idea of mystery—of a Being distant and unapproachable. So in the New Testament God is offered to human worship as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

But does this infinitude of God prevent our affection or worship? No more than the mysteries of the material world prevent our enjoyment of nature. On the contrary, it heightens every religious feeling. Were all mystery dissipated from the earth,

---

* Shelley's Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.

half its beauty would be gone. Its brightness would cease to charm the eye, if not relieved by shadows. So in religion. The mind loves to lose itself in mystery and gloom. The most striking of sacred objects, like the veil in the ancient temple, are sublime, not for what they are, but for what they suggest. The object of our worship must verge away into the unknown. Could we once scale heaven, and comprehend the Infinite, our devotion would come to a pause.

Is it said, Then in the future world our adoration of God will cease, as we enter his presence? I answer, No; for as we learn more of the Divine Being, we shall find constantly new wonders to explore. Were it possible ever to comprehend God utterly, then, indeed, our religious awe would abate. But his immensity admits of no complete apprehension, any more than the beginning of eternity, or the limits of space. The farther we go, the more we shall wonder and adore. Newton worshipped his Creator more profoundly than was possible for an ignorant man; and archangels bend lower, the nearer they approach the throne.

This obscurity of the Divine nature is made apparent to teach man, in approaching God, to worship rather than to speculate. It bids him be modest in his religious inquiries, for that his Maker transcends his feeble thought. Thus it checks familiarity; it rebukes the impertinence of philosophy.

It is a question whether the habit of speculating so freely on the Divine nature has not extinguished much of the spirit of adoration. Men discuss their Creator as if he were but a curious subject of metaphysical inquiry.

This shallow and self-confident spirit, which thinks to compass even God in its systems; to analyze the faculties of his mind, and to assign the limitations of his power, is deadening to the very spirit of religion. Men may as well paint the Deity on canvas, or carve him into a statue, like a pagan god, as to circumscribe him with their definitions. While the reverent study of the Creator deepens the feeling of awe, this subtle philosophizing is unfriendly to that prostration of soul demanded in religious worship. Rationalism never inspires awe, or bows its disciples in adoration.

Now the spirit of worship is the fountain of all sublime emotions or efforts. It is only when the soul is penetrated with a sense of something infinitely above its own poor, weak nature, that it is inspired with enthusiasm for either natural or moral beauty. Thus, whatever kills the spirit of adoration—whether materialism in philosophy, or rationalism in religion—is ultimately as fatal to art and poetry as it is to whatever is heroic and devoted in the human character.

It is worthy of remark that there is no attempt in the Bible to relieve philosophic doubts. Whatever concerns our duty is distinctly revealed, but nothing to gratify curiosity. The proud

skeptic may go away as wise as he came. Let him ask for wisdom from that human reason which he adores. Here the first direction to the seeker after truth is to become as a little child.

This dimness of revelation itself is a perpetual embarrassment to timid minds. They pine for more startling and decisive proofs of what God has spoken, and wonder that he should leave any obscurity resting on his Word. But they expect too much from Revelation. Its light is not like the full day, shining into every sequestered glen, but rather a pale twilight, only throwing on the earth the mighty shadows of the mountains. Many things in religion are purposely left half explained. The very doubts they excite constitute a part of our life's discipline. It were easy for God, by more direct interpositions, to produce an intensity of conviction which should for ever exclude doubt. But then there could be no submission of the natural infidelity of the mind to a simple reliance on his truth. Perfect knowledge would leave no room for believing. It is only in the temperate zone—the region of alternate warmth and cold—grows the beautiful flower of Faith.

IV. The darkness of God's providence is designed to exercise our religious trust.

We live under a dispensation of mingled light and shadow. Night follows day, and death succeeds to life. God's face is like the sun shining through clouds. There are in nature tokens of kindness, and yet there are, apparently, marks of anger. The globe is torn by earthquakes and volcanoes, and the air moans and shrieks in tempests. Our life is a labyrinth; it has a plan, but God alone can read it. Through this maze no man can see his way.

Yet God gives us confidence to plunge into this dark futurity by what he indicates to us of his own character. He shows us, not our destiny, but the nature of him who is to decide it. Though we know not what course our life is to take, yet we receive such proofs of the affection of a Father in heaven, that we may be reassured. We see not the hand that leads us on, yet we experience a constant care from an invisible source. Sometimes, indeed, there is a more palpable interposition for our safety. We are startled by what seems a supernatural event; a miraculous deliverance from danger or from sudden death. The relief is so instantaneous, that it pierces the gloom like a flash of lightning from the midnight sky. Instantly all is dark again. But that momentary illumination shows us that God is present in the night as in the day, and that he forgets not the most helpless of his creatures.

But, ordinarily, the Divine goodness is rather intimated by daily benefits, descending like the dew, than forced upon us by sudden breaks and interruptions of nature. God refrains from

divulging his secret agency, to throw us upon believing. If he should interpose visibly in every emergency of life, where would be the virtue or the blessedness of faith? No, when we reach the limit of our sight, we must *trust*. We are to rest our security on the immutable basis of the divine character. Many answer that they will believe when they see, and hold their confidence in suspense, until an event on which their hopes hang has transpired. But this is absolute impiety. If there be a God, and if his nature be justice and goodness, surely we can leave our fate at his disposal. We may not be sanguine as to particular events, but we should not doubt that his almighty will is better than our wayward passions.

This strong faith produces a submission as absolute as that of fatalism, yet unmixed with sorrow or despair. It is not the sullen gloom of the Mussulman, who sinks down and dies without a struggle. It is a resignation as cheerful as it is complete. Unbounded confidence in God quiets every emotion of sadness or discontent. This is not ignorant credulity. To believe is true wisdom. A life of faith is as far above that of mere philosophy as a life of reason is above that of sense. This is the highest point to which religion carries man, where his will and his being are lost in God. I love the Bible for teaching me this virtue of absolute submission; I love that voice which thunders out of the cloud, "Be still, and know that I am God;" I love Jesus Christ for that great example of resignation when he said, "Not my will, but thine be done."

V. Yet another reason why God withdraws himself from men, is to leave them perfectly free, to furnish a better opportunity for the development of character.

This is a world of probation. Every influence is excluded which could impair the trial. For this reason, God does not permit his own presence to embarrass the conduct of his creatures. Men cannot act out themselves under the influence of fear. If they were every moment apprised of the presence of their Judge, they would be placed under a restraint; they could not show what were their true characters.

That such would be the effect of a more direct vision of the Almighty, appears from those instances in which mortals have caught a glimpse of the light within the veil. Such terror has seized them as to overpower reflection, and almost to take away life. Thus, when that mysterious cloud rested upon the head of Sinai, "All the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Knowing that such would always be the effect, and that his

presence, if it did not call forth a willing, would force a hypocritical obedience, God averts his face. He leaves man to plan and plot without restraint. One bend of that awful eye would cause the earth to tremble, but it is turned away.

Just enough is revealed to keep the mind in an attitude of expectation, yet not enough to paralyze it with fear. The working of unseen power always stirs in us an emotion of awe. The dark cloud where the thunderbolt slumbers, the lull of volcanic fires, the calm of the ocean, suggest the ideas of omnipotent energies in repose. Like these immense forces of nature, the power of God in governing the world is held in abeyance; because, if manifested in a sudden and terrific form, the proper feeling of awe would be swallowed up in the stronger emotion of terror.

For the same reason, the future is enveloped in obscurity, that, while it gives exercise to faith, it may keep expectation awake. In the movements of Providence there is an uncertainty which stimulates fidelity. God knows when we are to die, but he will not tell us. Death, at last, takes us all by surprise. It stops not for us to finish our plans of life. This is to warn us to be "always ready."

It is to discover more completely the character of bad men that their punishment is delayed. God has manifested his displeasure against all evil, and his general purpose of retribution. But he tells no man the day of his execution; he even suffers the foolhardy to delude themselves with the idea of impunity. Every day we behold, on the great stage of the world, gigantic and successful crime. But not all human guilt can provoke him to anticipate the hour of judgment. God is patient because he is eternal. Yet he has not abandoned the earth to the wicked; he is not deaf to the cries of the poor and the oppressed; his own time is fixed when he will lift up the sorrowful, and bring down the proud. As the canvas of history unrolls, we shall find that the short triumph of evil but gives a deeper bitterness to its fall.

This subject, therefore, the invisibility of God, though apparently obscure and remote from any human interest, comes forth at last with a fearful warning to the guilty, but with encouragement to the good to hope and believe to the last extremity.

Let no man presume to sin because God has retired from the scene, or because he defers punishment. The very fact that you behold not your Maker should make you watchful. An invisible Being cannot be guarded against; an unseen Spirit may be every where present, and watch men even in their places of concealment. Thus, God hears the blasphemies of the wicked, as well as the prayers of the righteous. Do not dream that you may finally escape, because you see no avenue by which punishment can reach you. Who knows where the lightning will strike, or from what cloud it will dart to the earth? God's messengers are

every where. Still, but deadly as the pestilence, they fly abroad on the wind; disease floats in the heat of summer noon, as in the damps of midnight. Who knows when the angel of death has his foot on the threshold? Then be not confident: "Boast not of to-morrow."

What an hour will be that of death for unbelief; for hardened villany, incredulous of futurity, and disdaining the cowardly fear of retribution; for the base, bad man; for the impious wretch who has defied his Maker! What a moment will that be which raises the curtain between the visible and invisible worlds!

An Atheist comes to the close of life, still proud, and resolved to die as he has lived. He seems to stand on the brink of a precipice, which shoots down to a bottomless depth. Dense, chilling mists roll upward from the gulf. He owns the dismal uncertainty of his doom—

"I stoop into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud."

But suddenly that ocean of darkness lifts, and behold! a prospect more dreadful than annihilation! From the distant horizon comes, rushing like a sun, that great and terrible Being whose existence this miserable man has denied; God is at last revealed to the view of the disembodied spirit. From that presence there is now no escape. "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Then shall they long to die, and death shall flee from them.

But to every good man we can say with confidence, Have faith in God; his ways are dark, but they are not unjust; he is secret, but he is not unkind; "Clouds and darkness are round about him, but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

The greatest happiness in life is to have a strong religious faith. This you are to cultivate. From what is seen, believe in what is unseen. If temptation assail your virtue or piety, "endure, as seeing Him who is invisible;" if sudden darkness comes over the earth, still look upward, and you may see the pillar of cloud slowly turning to a column of fire.

The reasoning which we have applied to the mysterious nature and providence of God will apply to the spiritual world. That is invisible. We reach out our hands, but we cannot touch it; we strain our eyes, but we cannot see it; we call on the dead to speak, or give some sign of recognition, but all is still; spirits whisper to each other, and are silent. Where, then, is the world of souls?

Thoughtful minds, in all ages, have fallen into deep melancholy while pondering on the mystery of death and the darkness of their fate. Struggling with the uncertainties of their situation, and impatient to resolve the mysteries of existence, they have sometimes longed to burst asunder the bond of life, and thus at once

to terminate their perplexities. Plato thought that a philosophic mind must await with eagerness the moment of death. It seems, indeed, impossible to restrain human curiosity to this side the grave. Men have tried every means to penetrate the invisible world; they have interrogated dreams and ghosts; they have studied astrology to read their destiny in the stars; they have spent whole lives in poring over magic, to learn nature's great secret—the essence of life, and the power of prolonging it at will. But death has still come to cut short their imagined immortality.

The gospel has brought life and immortality to light; but it does not, therefore, clear up all mystery in regard to a future state. We still see through a glass darkly. The coming life is to this as the night to the day. Religion only scatters gleams of light over the firmament, like stars shining through the universal night of death. In its revelations of futurity, it manifests a wise reserve. The wisdom of God is as apparent in what he conceals as in what he discloses. Had the Scriptures gone into minute details, and laid bare all the secrets of heaven and hell, they would have brought suspicion on their credibility. It is a mark of impostors that they talk extravagantly of the future and the invisible; but the Bible is not a book of marvels. It speaks in brief, but significant sentences. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." But what we are to experience in that endless life of holiness and peace, or of passion and of woe it will be time enough to discover when we enter upon it.

Be not impatient to know the secrets of the invisible world. Soon enough will that awful morning rise. Were those scenes now to burst upon our vision, we should be overwhelmed. It is better that that land should be for a time unknown. We must live by faith. We know the goodness of God, and are sure of immortality. Here our knowledge ends. For the rest, we must wait the great revealer, Death. That, indeed, will be the moment when our eyes shall be opened: then we shall wake as from a troubled dream; then we shall know all. O sacred death! which shall deliver us from the darkness and mystery which encompass our lives, from perplexity, and doubt, and fear!

In this, hope, if you have loved and lived worthy of a man and a Christian; if you have tried to do your duty faithfully as a member of the great human family, you may depart in peace; you can commit yourself to God, trusting in the great provision which he has made for the progress of souls: you may await the [illegible] awakening. No sudden loss will be discovered [illegible] no power will blast you. You will have a protector in the invisible God, who reigns not only over the mortal state, but over the regions of eternity, who is the God of the dead and the living.

SERMON DLXX.

BY REV. E. L. CLEVELAND, D. D.,
NEW-HAVEN, CONN.

THE BURIED SEED-CORN; OR LIFE FROM DEATH.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."—JOHN XII. 24.

It was on the eve of that dread consummation to which our Lord had ever been looking forward with an intense, and often with an agonizing interest, that he stood in the temple surrounded by an excited crowd, eager to see and hear the wonderful being whose mighty deeds had just now reached a glorious climax in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. His fame had then attained its height. The dead he had raised before; but the miracle at Bethany transcended every previous one, in the fact that it was performed four days after death. All suspicion of mistake or deception was removed, and the stupendous power of the miracle stood forth to the conviction and astonishment of the nation. From that moment the popular admiration became all but universal. Even the rulers and Pharisees were obliged to confess that "the world had gone after him." When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was moved at his coming; and his faithful disciples must have felt that the hour of his triumph was at hand. No doubt their enthusiastic imaginations already figured the scene of his coronation as King of the Jews and Lord of the world. Even before this, their ambition had been busy in appropriating to themselves the highest seats of power and dignity under their royal Master. And now, they questioned not, the time was come for the realization of their aspiring hopes. The moment had arrived when he was to arise in his majesty and restore the kingdom again to Israel.

Jesus also felt that the moment was at hand when the long night of his adversity would end in a day of honor—when his reproach would be turned to praise. "The hour is come," said he, "that the Son of man should be glorified." But the glory he anticipated was not the glory his disciples expected. He was not dazzled or elated by the applause he received. The glory of which he spoke was not predicated on the present tide of popularity, which seemed destined to raise him to the highest political and religious honors. He knew that tide would set back ere

long, and abandon him to the fury of his enemies. Nor was it temporal glory at all he had in view: far other scenes lay in his eye. It was no joy of earth he set before him; no carnal triumph. The glorification to which he alluded was to be realized in the loss of all worldly greatness; yea, in the lowest depths of degradation and suffering. It was to be found, not upon a throne, but upon the cross; or, at least, it was by such experience alone that he was to reach the scene of his glory. This is evident from the words of the text which immediately follow the words just quoted respecting the hour of his glorification: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Our Lord, foreseeing the disappointment of his disciples when they should witness his crucifixion and death instead of his elevation to regal state and power, made provision for their comfort in advance, by assuring them that this dark and dreadful chapter in his history was indispensable to that great and blessed result which he came on earth to accomplish. It was not an unforeseen accident; it was not an incidental loss—but a necessary part of his mediatorial work. It behooved him thus to suffer. Indeed, without the suffering, he could not gain the joy; without the shame, he could not win the glory. As the seed-corn cannot produce the plant unless it first undergo a species of vegetable decomposition, so he could not be glorified unless he first suffered an ignominious death, and descended to a malefactor's grave. When, therefore, the disciples should see their Lord suspended on the cross, or laid in the tomb, they need not be cast down, as though all their hopes were for ever extinguished. On the contrary, they should reflect, for their comfort, that this lowest step in the process of humiliation is essential to the accomplishment of that ascending series of triumphs which is to terminate in his coronation at the right hand of God.

But while Jesus thus graciously provided for the consolation of his followers in their approaching hour of tribulation, he at the same time uttered a truth of vital importance to the Christian system, and universal in its bearings upon the actions of men. It is a clear and unambiguous announcement of the fundamental principle of human redemption. The death of Christ is here set forth in no subordinate relation to his mediatorial work. It holds a primary position. Death enters into the essential elements of his expiation. He suffered this consequence of sin, not because it lay in his way, but he chose this way because it led to death. The mouldering and partial decay of the seed is not an unimportant accident in the process of germination. On the contrary, it is indispensable to reproduction. It is put into the ground to the very end that it may die, and so live again. "Except it fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth

forth much fruit." The death of Christ sustains a similar relation to the work of redemption. If he had not died, no benefit whatever would have resulted from his mission; but, inasmuch as he did experience dissolution, a glorious harvest of blessings has been gathered in consequence. This event, then, is the great, central fact of his history. Here was concentrated the bitterest dregs of the cup which was given him to drink; this was the agony that pressed him to the earth in Gethsemane, that "wrung his bosom's core," and forced the bloody sweat. It was all connected with the final death-scene. Every thing pointed to the sacrifice on the cross as the all-absorbing fact of Christianity. To this referred the unconscious prophecy of the high priest, when he said, "It is expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not." To this, also, refer those words of Christ, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me;" implying that his uplifting was indispensable, not only as one link in the chain, but as the great event of his incarnation, for which all others were but a preparation, and upon which hung the whole question of man's redemption. The crucifixion was the subject of that inquiry, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Was it not necessary, if man was to be saved, that the Messiah should suffer death? No truth of Christianity is declared more frequently, or in a greater variety of forms, than that "without shedding of blood is no remission."

To deny, therefore, that Christ became incarnate on purpose to suffer death, as the great event of his mission, and to affirm instead, that he died merely because death lay across his path, and he must suffer it or forego his benevolent design, is to oppose the entire current of Scripture, and to degrade that stupendous sacrifice to a level with common martyrdom. Martyrs suffer death because it meets them on their way, and they cannot avoid it without turning aside from the Christian race. Has the death of Christ no higher significance? Is he only the first great martyr in the Christian cause? If so, then neither in respect to his sufferings nor his fortitude has he the pre-eminence over his disciples. Thousands have suffered deaths as ignominious, and far more excruciating, with less expression of pain. Thousands of saints have passed through the extremest agonies, not only without a groan, but with triumphant songs of holy joy—while their divine Master cried out under the anguish of his spirit, and made complaint to God. Is it credible that he had no more to suffer than they? Is it worthy of a moment's belief, that, like other holy martyrs, he had only to endure in that dark hour the contradiction of sinners against himself? No; in the sorrows of Gethsemane, in the groans and lamentations of Calvary, we read a deeper meaning. Undoubtedly there was a bitterness in this death that can be predicated of no other since the world began. It was the bitterness of

sin, not his own, but of the race for which he died. He tasted death for every man—for every man's sin. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." For one who knew no sin to be made sin, must mean to be made a sin-offering. The Jewish idea of a sin-offering was that of a victim sacrificed on account of some offense committed, by means of which the offender was released from certain penal liabilities, which he must otherwise have suffered. This must have been the idea conveyed by the language in question to Paul's immediate readers. This is the sense attached to it by the Church in every age, and this alone agrees with sound Christian experience. Here, then, was the source of our Saviour's agony, and this was the solemn import of his death. He died that he might put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and bring many sons and daughters unto God. But in doing this, he had to bear unearthly sufferings. His sensitive and affectionate nature had to endure the awful hidings of his Father's face. Here was that death, and that depth of agony in death, referred to in the text. I know it is affirmed that we are not to suppose that the reality, in this sublime scene, exactly corresponds with the appearance. It is a representation, we are told, and we must be content to take what it expresses, as if it were real. To this chilling and ghastly theory, I have only time to say, that it is alike repugnant to Scripture and to the confiding impulses of a genuine piety. On this point, Dr. Chalmers holds the following impressive language: "It was not the parade of an unreal suffering that he [the Saviour] had to encounter; but a deep and dreadful endurance. It was not a triumphant promenade through this lower world, made easy over all its obstacles by the energies of his Godhead; but a conflict of toil and of strenuousness. It was not an egress from heaven on a journey brightened through all its stages by the hope of a smooth and gentle return; but it was such an exile from heaven as made his ascent and his re-admittance there the fruit of a hard-won victory. We have nothing but the facts of revelation to guide or inform us; and yet from these we most assuredly gather that the Saviour, in stepping down from the elevation of his past eternity, incurred a substantial degradation; that when he wrapped himself in the humanity of our nature, he put on the whole of its infirmities and sorrows; that, for the joy which he renounced, he became acquainted with grief, and a grief, too, commensurate to the whole burden of our world's atonement; that the hidings of his Father's countenance were terrifying to his soul; and when the offended justice of the Godhead was laid upon his person, it required the whole strength of the Godhead to sustain it. What mean the agonies of the garden? What mean the bitter cries and complainings of aban-

donment upon the cross? What meaneth the prayer that the cup might pass away from him; and the struggle of a lofty resolution with the agonies of a mighty and unknown distress; and the evident symptoms of a great and toilsome achievement throughout the whole progress of this undertaking; and angels looking down from their eminences, as on a field of contest, where a great Captain had to put forth the travailing of his strength, and to spoil principalities and powers, and to make a show of them openly? Was there nothing in all this, do you think, but the mockery of a humiliation that was never felt; the mockery of a pain that was never suffered; the mockery of a battle that was never fought? No; be assured that there was on that day a real vindication of God's insulted majesty. On that day there was the real transference of an avenging hand from the heads of the guilty to the head of the innocent. On that day one man died for the people, and there was an actual laying on of the iniquities of us all. It was a war of strength and of suffering in highest possible aggravation, *because a war of elements which were infinite.*"

We have now seen how the principle of the text realizes its first great fulfilment in the work of redemption. Here we have eternal life through the death of the Prince of Life. Not until the cause of Christianity seemed utterly ruined, was the corner-stone of its prosperity fairly laid. When its divine Author bowed his head and gave up the ghost, the hearts of his disciples, in sympathy with the preternatural darkness that veiled the hour, sank in despair of the kingdom they hoped to see, while his enemies raised the shout of triumph over their fallen victim. Yet the despondency of the former and the exultation of the latter were equally groundless. From that very death, the subject of so much lamentation and rejoicing, sprang the germ of an endless life. Then, for the first time, was death itself conquered; then was bruised the head of him who had wielded the power of death; then was laid the foundation of that righteousness which is the only basis of reconciliation with God; then, with the rending of the temple-vail, was opened the way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: then, indeed, were uplifted the flood-gates of blessing upon our world. The death of Christ! what has it not procured for us? What good thing have we in this world, what hope for in that which is to come, that we did not receive through this great event? "Verily, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." What an immense harvest has this death produced! Once it was but a handful of corn in the top of the mountains; now, the fruit thereof shakes like Lebanon. And we cannot but notice here the ratio and the law of increase. A single grain of wheat, by mouldering in the

earth, not only reproduces itself in a new and more beautiful form of life, but it multiplies itself many-fold. For one, you have hundreds. By venturing all, you receive your own with interest. This vegetable death takes your seed-corn, and, after well-nigh destroying it, returns it to you, no longer the little handful of precious grain, but full measure, shaken together, pressed down, and running over.

In the text, Christ represents himself as such a seed-corn, undergoing death, that he may bring forth much fruit. It was but one seed planted two thousand years ago; but who can estimate the rate of its increase? From that single germ have sprung all the plants of righteousness which have gladdened the earth. How many have already been gathered and garnered like shocks of corn fully ripe in their season. What rich and extensive harvests are still glistening in the sun, and whitening for the sickle! And when all that future ages shall give to Christ, even to the last gleanings of the vintage, are secured, and the angel-reapers shall shout the harvest-home; and of all the myriads which have passed in vision before the patriarch of Mamre, as the stars of heaven and as the sands upon the sea-shore, not one shall be missing in that final assemblage,—then will there be formed a company which no man can number, but all and each of whom can trace back their origin to that one precious seed promised in Isaac and planted on Calvary, and of whom the whole family is named. And then, oh! *then* will they lift the shout of praise like the voice of many waters, saying: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive riches and honor and blessing; for thou hast redeemed us out of every tongue and kindred and people and nation under heaven, and hast made us kings and priests unto God."

This thought brings to view that most precious and comforting doctrine, the union of Christ and his followers. The life in the seed-corn and the life in the fruit is one and the same. So also is the life of Christ and his members. It is his Spirit that dwells in them and forms his image on their souls. It produces the same mind in them that was also in Christ Jesus. Being thus engrafted into Christ, believers are subject to the same law of self-denial to which he submitted in the days of his flesh, and which he lays down in the text. They also must undergo a species of moral death, before they can enter into life. This thought is expressed in the words following the text: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." In other words: he who lives only to please himself, will fail of life's great end; while he who sacrifices his personal comforts, even to the extent of laying down life itself, when duty to Christ requires it, will certainly secure all that is valuable here, and an incorruptible inheritance here-

after. Thus one law pertains to the Master and the disciple; and, surely, it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master; enough for the servant that he be as his Lord. And if we are to share in his joy and triumph, we must expect also to share in his sorrow and his humiliation. "If one died for all," affirms the apostle, "then were all dead." "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death?" Not only was *he* crucified, but we, says Paul, are crucified with him. Not literally indeed, but spiritually. This is that denial of self, that death unto sin, foreshadowed in the text: "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." It is by such a crucifixion that the believer becomes first united to Christ. In the pride and fulness of the unrenewed man, he feels himself to be strong and rich, and in need of nothing for his soul, for which he has not in creature good an ample supply. He may be conscious indeed of ignorance and folly, but that is the result of carelessness and neglect, which can be easily remedied. He may be sensible that he has led a sinful life, but that he can repent of and reform. He supposes that God is offended with his evil conduct, but he can appease him by good behavior. He will not lay claim to much personal righteousness now, but he thinks he can readily acquire it. He fancies in himself, or at hand, all the resources he needs for any emergency likely to arise. He is whole, and needs no physician; he is strong, and needs no help. He takes counsel only of himself; lives only for himself. God is not in all his thoughts. Now, the problem is, how to translate this self-complacent and self-sufficient rebel from the service of Satan to the service of Christ, and clothe him with the graces of the Spirit. It is a great change, and can be effected only through the agency of *death*. The man must die before he can live; nay, he must suffer a most painful death; he must be crucified. So was it with persecuting Saul: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The strong man of the heart will keep his goods in peace, until a stronger than he, the Holy Spirit, cometh and taketh away that wherein he trusted, and spoileth him of his fancied wealth. The scantiness and rottenness of his own merits become more and more apparent as the spiritual illumination increases. It is a severe conflict, to give up as worthless what he had fain hoped would have met with divine acceptance. It is like tearing the flesh from his bones. He contends for every inch of ground, and surrenders one claim after another only when it is possible to hold it no longer. At last, there remains but a single plank of the vessel in which he had fondly hoped to have made a successful voyage to heaven. To this he clings. For this he makes desperate

fight. There is renewed and concentrated the intensest spirit of the war. The controversy is reduced now to a single point. It is his last hope; and to fail seems like throwing himself into the abyss of perdition. He dares not relinquish his hold; yet he must. 'Tis death if I do, he says. Yes, it *is* the very death he must die, or never be saved. It is dying to his own righteousness, which is dying unto sin, that he may live unto the righteousness of God. This letting go the last hope founded upon any doings of his own, before his feet have yet touched the rock Christ Jesus, may well be called dying. It is such often, in the agony of the process. It is such always in the change wrought upon the Spirit in regard to its former dependences, hopes, joys, and fears. He who has experienced this death, no longer trusts to his own righteousness. All his works have become as filthy rags in his sight. He now loathes himself for the very things which once made him proud. He no longer trusts in his own strength. He has proved that to be utter weakness, and he dares not rely upon it for one moment. He no longer lives to please himself alone. Such an object of life seems mean and contemptible and wicked in his eyes, and he turns away from it with abhorrence. In these, and many other respects, he is dead unto sin. He is also crucified to the world. He renounces its principles; he is indifferent to its pleasures. Its riches and honors cease to dazzle and intoxicate him. He recoils from its companionship, as neither safe nor congenial.

But the change which has passed over him is not all death. He has not lost all his former enjoyments, to receive nothing in their place. As in the case of the decomposed corn of wheat, this very death has evolved a new principle of life. True, says the subject of this experience, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." For the righteousness he has renounced, he finds a better in the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. In place of his own strength, he has an almighty arm on which to lean. That love once fixed upon himself is now placed upon an infinitely worthier object. The pleasures of the world give place to the joys of communion with God, while the society of the pious has a charm which he never found in that of the ungodly. He dies unto himself just because he lives unto God. But for this new object of interest and affection, the old never could have been dispossessed. Christ alone can cast out Satan. Until Jesus enters and ascends the throne, the enemy holds his place and power. But in this death-birth Christ is formed in the soul, the hope of glory. He becomes a new centre of attraction—a new object of worship and service—a new power wherewith to subdue the hosts of sin, and win the prize of life. From this moment the method of ope-

ration is reversed. The subject of the change had ever proceeded on the principle that holiness is the way to pardon. He now takes the ground that pardon is the way to holiness. All hope of making progress by works alone is taken away. Overwhelmed with conscious guilt and ruin, his very first request is, that all may be forgiven. Without this, he dare not, cannot take the first step in obedience. With so dark a cloud of condemnation hanging over him, what can he do? How can he work the works of righteousness? His utmost endeavors cannot turn away the wrath of God; and yet, till it *is* turned away, he can render no acceptable service, for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." It is impossible, therefore, to make a beginning on the path of reformation, until by an act of sovereign grace, proceeding on the basis of Christ's righteousness, his sins are pardoned, and his person justified before God. To obtain such an amnesty is the sinner's first care; till this is gained, every thing is at a stand. The moment it is granted, the emancipated soul bounds forward on the way of holy obedience, with a step the more elastic, and a zeal the more generous, because he is already forgiven. He runs, not that he may find, but because he has found a Saviour.

Finally, the text reminds us of the last glorious change which awaits the believer.

It does not belong to the present economy to complete the work of sanctification on this side the grave. So intimate is the connection of the sinning soul and its fallen companion, the body, and so powerful for evil is the influence of the latter upon the former, that the spirit never can rise to the perfection of holiness and bliss while it remains a tenant of the flesh. This earthly clod will ever hang as a heavy drag upon its purest and loftiest aspirations. Hence in this tabernacle the saints "do groan, being burdened; not for that they would be unclothed, but clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, that mortality may be swallowed up of life." This ardent desire of the renewed mind cannot be realized but by the intervention of death. That dreaded change is a necessary step in the sublime process which begins in regeneration, and is consummated in the resurrection. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." We have seen how this was realized in the person of Christ. His people also must follow him through that dark passage on their way to glory. So completely has the body sympathized with the indwelling spirit in its guilty revolt; so fearfully has it suffered from the shock and ruin of the fall; so wrecked has it been by the terrific storm which has passed over it; so diseased is it in every part by the polluting contagion of sin, that, to become a fit temple for the ransomed and perfected soul, it must be taken down and utterly demolished,—it must go into dissolution, and then be raised again

are not a Christian, you are at this moment an opposing sinner at heart, however much you may be awakened to a sense of your guilt and danger. Do you feel yourself

"Awaked by Sinai's awful sound!"

Then flee to Jesus without delay. Think not that because you are awakened, you are safe. Hell is peopled with those who on earth were awakened sinners.

Distressed sinner! a word to you! Do not suppose that your distress merits any favor for you at the hand of God. If sinners suppose that *because* they are so much distressed, God will have mercy on them, they contemn those agonies which were endured on Calvary. Your increased distress is the fruit of your protracted rebellion. Do not, then, imagine for a moment that your tears and anguish and cries shall be reckoned to make up any part—no, not the smallest fraction—of the ground of your acceptance with God. Your only source of hope can be expressed in three short words, *faith in Christ.* The language of your heart must be,

"Simply to *thy* cross I cling."

Then all shall be peace between your troubled soul and your offended God.

Hoping sinner! a word to you! Is your only hope in the atoning blood of the Lamb of God? If so, I rejoice. You will be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. But examine well. You *may* have deceived yourself. Read the parable of the ten virgins, and contemplate its leading sentiment, which is this: Make *thorough* preparation for the hour of trial. Take oil in your vessels with your lamps. Do you indeed hope that your feet are taken from the miry clay, and are placed upon the rock? Then will you sing, "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!" Do you begin to taste the gospel feast? Then will you be constrained to say—

"Why was *I* made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come!"

Do you hope that you now inquire the way to Zion, with your face thitherward? Then cast your eye upon the multitudes in that broad road that leads to death. Go, young convert! Warn that stupid sinner. Expostulate with that opposing sinner. Exhort that awakened sinner. Plead in melting terms with that distressed sinner. In the deep fervor of your soul, tell them all what a Saviour you have found!

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5, Vol. XXVI] MAY, 1852. [Whole No. 305.

SERMON DLXXI.

BY REV. HEMAN HUMPHREY, D.D.,

PITTSFIELD, MASS.

TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION.

"Is thy heart right?"—2 Kings x. 15.

This was the abrupt salutation of that impetuous captain, Jehu the son of Nimshi, who so suddenly overthrew the bloody dynasty of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. He was then on his way to Samaria, to give the finishing stroke to his terrible commission; and meeting Jonadab as he approached the city, the first question was, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is right with thee?" "It is right," was the instant answer. Whereupon Jehu gave him his hand, and took him up into the chariot without further introduction.

I shall take occasion from this passage to point out, in several particulars, the distinction between true religion and some of its more plausible substitutes and counterfeits. "Is thy heart right" with God, as Jonadab's heart was right with Jehu? It may be wrong in many ways, even when you think it is right. You may be an enemy to God in your heart, while you profess to love and honor him.

Destitute of saving piety, as large classes of men certainly are, if the Bible is true, there are very few but that have some kind of religion, which they hope and expect will save them. To enumerate all the ways in which men deceive themselves, would require more time than we can spare. Let me briefly, in this discourse, call your attention to the following kinds of religion:

The religion of the Eye and the Ear;
The religion of Forms and Ceremonies;
The religion of the Intellect;
The religion of the Imagination;

are not a Christian, you are at this moment an opposing sinner at heart, however much you may be awakened to a sense of your guilt and danger. Do you feel yourself

"Awaked by Sinai's awful sound!"

Then flee to Jesus without delay. Think not that because you are awakened, you are safe. Hell is peopled with those who on earth were awakened sinners.

Distressed sinner! a word to you! Do not suppose that your distress merits any favor for you at the hand of God. If sinners suppose that *because* they are so much distressed, God will have mercy on them, they contemn those agonies which were endured on Calvary. Your increased distress is the fruit of your protracted rebellion. Do not, then, imagine for a moment that your tears and anguish and cries shall be reckoned to make up any part—no, not the smallest fraction—of the ground of your acceptance with God. Your only source of hope can be expressed in three short words, *faith in Christ.* The language of your heart must be,

"Simply to *thy* cross I cling."

Then all shall be peace between your troubled soul and your offended God.

Hoping sinner! a word to you! Is your only hope in the atoning blood of the Lamb of God? If so, I rejoice. You will be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. But examine well. You *may* have deceived yourself. Read the parable of the ten virgins, and contemplate its leading sentiment, which is this: Make *thorough* preparation for the hour of trial. Take oil in your vessels with your lamps. Do you indeed hope that your feet are taken from the miry clay, and are placed upon the rock? Then will you sing, "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!" Do you begin to taste the gospel feast? Then will you be constrained to say—

"Why was *I* made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come!"

Do you hope that you now inquire the way to Zion, with your face thitherward? Then cast your eye upon the multitudes in that broad road that leads to death. Go, young convert! Warn that stupid sinner. Expostulate with that opposing sinner. Exhort that awakened sinner. Plead in melting terms with that distressed sinner. In the deep fervor of your soul, tell them all what a Saviour you have found!

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5, Vol. XXVI.] MAY, 1852. [Whole No. 305.

SERMON DLXXI.

BY REV. HEMAN HUMPHREY, D.D.,

PITTSFIELD, MASS.

TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION.

"Is thy heart right?"—2 Kings x. 15.

This was the abrupt salutation of that impetuous captain, Jehu the son of Nimshi, who so suddenly overthrew the bloody dynasty of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. He was then on his way to Samaria, to give the finishing stroke to his terrible commission; and meeting Jonadab as he approached the city, the first question was, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is right with thee?" "It is right," was the instant answer. Whereupon Jehu gave him his hand, and took him up into the chariot without further introduction.

I shall take occasion from this passage to point out, in several particulars, the distinction between true religion and some of its more plausible substitutes and counterfeits. "Is thy heart right" with God, as Jonadab's heart was right with Jehu? It may be wrong in many ways, even when you think it is right. You may be an enemy to God in your heart, while you profess to love and honor him.

Destitute of saving piety, as large classes of men certainly are, if the Bible is true, there are very few but that have some kind of religion, which they hope and expect will save them. To enumerate all the ways in which men deceive themselves, would require more time than we can spare. Let me briefly, in this discourse, call your attention to the following kinds of religion:

The religion of the Eye and the Ear;
The religion of Forms and Ceremonies;
The religion of the Intellect;
The religion of the Imagination;

are not a Christian, you are at this moment an opposing sinner at heart, however much you may be awakened to a sense of your guilt and danger. Do you feel yourself

"Awaked by Sinai's awful sound!"

Then flee to Jesus without delay. Think not that because you are awakened, you are safe. Hell is peopled with those who on earth were awakened sinners.

Distressed sinner! a word to you! Do not suppose that your distress merits any favor for you at the hand of God. If sinners suppose that *because* they are so much distressed, God will have mercy on them, they contemn those agonies which were endured on Calvary. Your increased distress is the fruit of your protracted rebellion. Do not, then, imagine for a moment that your tears and anguish and cries shall be reckoned to make up any part—no, not the smallest fraction—of the ground of your acceptance with God. Your only source of hope can be expressed in three short words, *faith in Christ.* The language of your heart must be,

"Simply to *thy* cross I cling."

Then all shall be peace between your troubled soul and your offended God.

Hoping sinner! a word to you! Is your only hope in the atoning blood of the Lamb of God? If so, I rejoice. You will be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. But examine well. You *may* have deceived yourself. Read the parable of the ten virgins, and contemplate its leading sentiment, which is this: Make *thorough* preparation for the hour of trial. Take oil in your vessels with your lamps. Do you indeed hope that your feet are taken from the miry clay, and are placed upon the rock? Then will you sing, "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!" Do you begin to taste the gospel feast? Then will you be constrained to say—

"Why was *I* made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come!"

Do you hope that you now inquire the way to Zion, with your face thitherward? Then cast your eye upon the multitudes in that broad road that leads to death. Go, young convert! Warn that stupid sinner. Expostulate with that opposing sinner. Exhort that awakened sinner. Plead in melting terms with that distressed sinner. In the deep fervor of your soul, tell them all what a Saviour you have found!

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5, Vol. XXVI] MAY, 1852. [Whole No. 305.

SERMON DLXXI.

BY REV. HEMAN HUMPHREY, D.D.,

PITTSFIELD, MASS.

TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION.

"Is thy heart right?"—2 Kings x. 15.

This was the abrupt salutation of that impetuous captain, Jehu the son of Nimshi, who so suddenly overthrew the bloody dynasty of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. He was then on his way to Samaria, to give the finishing stroke to his terrible commission; and meeting Jonadab as he approached the city, the first question was, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is right with thee?" "It is right," was the instant answer. Whereupon Jehu gave him his hand, and took him up into the chariot without further introduction.

I shall take occasion from this passage to point out, in several particulars, the distinction between true religion and some of its more plausible substitutes and counterfeits. "Is thy heart right" with God, as Jonadab's heart was right with Jehu? It may be wrong in many ways, even when you think it is right. You may be an enemy to God in your heart, while you profess to love and honor him.

Destitute of saving piety, as large classes of men certainly are, if the Bible is true, there are very few but that have some kind of religion, which they hope and expect will save them. To enumerate all the ways in which men deceive themselves, would require more time than we can spare. Let me briefly, in this discourse, call your attention to the following kinds of religion:

The religion of the Eye and the Ear;
The religion of Forms and Ceremonies;
The religion of the Intellect;
The religion of the Imagination;

The religion of Conscience;
The religion of the Natural Affections;
The religion of Morality;
The religion of Animal Excitement; and
The religion of the Heart.

I. *The Religion of the Eye and Ear.* The exquisite mechanism of these organs can never cease to excite the admiration of those who study it. How curiously, how wonderfully are they both constructed!

The eye is the window of the soul, through which it looks out upon all the majesty and glory of the creation; upon the heavens, "the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained; upon the green earth and sparkling waters, upon the pastures clothed with flocks, and the valleys covered over with corn." Upon the works of art, too, in all their masterly design and finish, the eye looks out with ever new delight.

And then, there is the *ear*, always on the alert, and ready to be ravished with sweet sounds and choral harmonies; charmed alike with the music of the groves and the symphonies of the orchestra. Such an eye, such an ear, indeed, but few possess. It requires a refined taste for music, and those quick and lively perceptions of the beautiful and sublime, with which the multitude are not gifted. But when they are possessed in a high degree, they are extremely liable to be mistaken for true religion. Passionate lovers of the forms and voices of nature can hardly help persuading themselves that these pleasures are divine.

With some, this is a sort of refined *pantheism*, which is the more dangerous, in proportion as it is more sublimated and plausible. They see and hear God in every thing, till they come by degrees to divest him of his personality, and to identify his very being with universal nature; with the sun and the stars; with the whisperings of the forest and the murmurings of the brooks; with the ocean in its stormy wrath and in its repose; with the lightnings and the thunder. As they gaze upon the face of nature, and listen to her thousand voices, they are alternately filled with awe and delight; and this is their religion. It is the *whole* of it. They go no further. They are the worshippers of deified nature, and not of the Deity himself, who is a spirit, distinct from all, infinitely above all, "glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises."

A lower class of these eye-and-ear religionists entertain notions which, though not so transcendental, equally endanger their souls. While they do not, like the former class, rob God of his personal identity and spirituality, by deifying the whole material universe, they equally mistake the more refined pleasures of sense for that communion with the Father of their spirits, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, in which all true religion consists. They mistake sweet sounds and lovely forms for those holy fruitions

which, like the dew and the manna, drop down from heaven. As they cast their eyes over some enchanting landscape, or look up in a clear night to the pure sapphire, sown by the hand of Omnipotence all over the sky, they exclaim, "This is a beautiful world, a glorious universe!" and they are entranced. It is *heaven* to them. They do not desire, they cannot conceive of any higher, purer enjoyment; and they are sure this must be true religion, if there is any such thing. The bliss of Paradise may be more ecstatic, but the difference, they are confident, must be only in *degree*. The fields may be more elysian, and the firmament more sparkling, but it must be a sensuous paradise, or it will be no heaven to them.

So of music. There are those who drink in the melody, as it is poured out from the deep-toned organ and full choir, till they are sweetly intoxicated; and as sacred music delights them most of all, perhaps, they identify it with a feeling of pure devotion, and are quite confident they can never be weary of listening to the angelic choirs; when at the same time all this fervor, all this ecstacy, is the mere religion of sense—of an exquisitely tuned ear, with which the heart has nothing to do. Here their devotion begins, and here it ends. As soon as the last strains of the anthem have died away, and the messenger of God rises in his place to propound the great truths of the gospel, to discourse to them about the true heaven and the way to be saved, all at once "their ears are dull of hearing." Oh, what a weariness is the prayer and the sermon! In vain is the blessed Saviour held up before them. They "see no form nor comeliness in him, why they should desire him." In a word, the more spiritual and heavenly the worship, the more irksome to them. In their estimation, the holiest zeal for the glory of God, the most active strivings for the salvation of men, the purest and most fervent piety, are no better than ranting enthusiasm, or sanctimonious hypocrisy. And yet, they think themselves very religious. They are, in their way; but alas! what is it, save the religion of a musical ear? How totally different from that of a humble and contrite heart. We pass,

II. To the *Religion of Forms and Ceremonies*. I hardly need to say, that Romanism is preëminently of this character; a system the most dazzling, seductive, and overpowering, that ever bewildered and enslaved the human mind. Consider for a moment what it presents to the eye and the ear: the vast cathedral, with its towers and pinnacles, on which the abrasion of centuries has made no perceptible impression; the long-drawn aisles, immense columns, and lofty arches; the apostles and prophets always looking in through stained windows; the holy font at the entrance; the interior, one vast chamber of imagery, full of altars, and statues, and paintings; devotees of both sexes and all ages, kneeling, bowing, and crossing themselves every where upon the pavements; the Saviour on the cross always bleeding before

484734

their eyes in the agonies of crucifixion, above the high altar; the gorgeous canonicals of the priests; the elevation of the host; the burning of incense; the solemn tones of the organ; the chanting, the requiems; the tombs of canonized saints; the worship of the Virgin; prayers for the dead; and in short, all the imposing mummery of a sensuous and idolatrous ritual. Add to all this, an indefinite number of fasts, and vigils, and processions, and saints' days; and how mournfully demonstrative it is that the religion of the vast majority of Romanists is the religion of forms and ceremonies merely. Oh! how few of such worshippers ever consider that "God is a spirit, and that they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Nor are Romanists alone in this fatal delusion. It has crept into the pale of Protestantism, or rather, the "old leaven" was never thoroughly purged out. From the days of Elizabeth to the present time, forms and ceremonies have been clung to in churches called reformed, (and in many things truly reformed,) as if the "form of godliness" was more essential than the power. Many, there is reason to fear, lay more stress upon the saving efficacy of baptism, the laying on of hands by the apostolic succession, and the prescribed ceremonies of worship, than upon that "faith which works by love, and purifies the heart."

III. We next come to the *Religion of the Intellect.* Man has an intelligent and immortal soul. He is endowed by the Creator with faculties of mind, as well as organs of sense. Made but a little lower than the angels, his thoughts are deep and high, and "wander through eternity." He can investigate, he can reason, he can look at religion in its principles, in its harmonious relations, and in its adaptation to man's condition and wants. He can compare different systems and articles of faith with one another, and with the Word of God. He can see and admire the symmetry and beauty of the gospel plan, while yet his heart is unrenewed, just as he admires the architectural beauty and proportions of a Grecian temple. We have some such men in most of our well-instructed congregations. Having been religiously educated in the family, and sat under sound and discriminating preaching, their speculative views are substantially correct. They believe in man's total apostasy from God; in the necessity of regeneration by the Spirit of God; in the Deity and atonement of Christ; in the absolute necessity of faith and repentance; in a coming judgment; and in the eternity of future rewards and punishments. In short, they believe every thing you could desire. Their heads are right. They are decidedly orthodox, more so than some real Christians; and they glory in their orthodoxy. They discriminate with remarkable clearness. They pride themselves in being champions of the faith once delivered to the saints, and he must be no ordinary tactician who can foil them. They see a kind of architectural beauty, sublimity, and completeness

in the Bible which charms them. It is a grand and glorious revelation, which commends itself to their understanding as worthy of the wisdom and benevolence of its divine Author. They believe it. They embrace it intellectually and honestly. But this is the whole of their religion; not a part, as it ought to be, but the *whole* of it. Here they stop. Their heads are as clear as a winter night, but their hearts are just as cold. It is all *intellect.* They believe; and so do the devils believe and tremble, but that can never save them. Next in order,

IV. Comes the *Religion of Imagination.* This is the religion of poetry and romance; and those who embrace it are chiefly persons of a nervous temperament, the morbid devourers of novels and plays; dreamy idealists, who scorn the dull and plodding realities of this every-day world, and so create a world for themselves, somewhere above the clouds, but as far from the throne of God and the Lamb as they can get. It must be a world of everlasting sunshine and the most voluptuous enjoyment. There must be no sickness there, no sorrow, no imperfect beings. All must be angels, and yet not one of them such as the Bible describes. The love and service of God constitute no part of the happiness of this imaginary heaven. It is a world sprung from nothing, at the bidding of the romancer, and filled with more than elysian delights. That the direct tendency of much of the admired poetry and so-called polite literature of the day is as above described, cannot be denied.

Do you say there is nothing of heaven in all this? It is not the heaven of the Bible, to be sure; but it is all the heaven that thousands wish for. It is not the New Jerusalem, nor any thing like it. It bears no resemblance to the mansions of the blessed. It is not the religion of the gospel. It is a mere figment of the brain, an airy nothing, and yet they try to grasp it; they cleave to it. It is all they have, and they do not crave any thing more substantial. The true heaven is infinitely too spiritual and holy for them, and so they must have an ideal paradise, and a religion suited to it. This is what I mean by the religion of the *imagination.* We pass now,

V. To the *Religion of Conscience.* Every person has a conscience. I stop not here to inquire whether conscience is a distinct faculty of the mind, or the reason alone, governing in the empire of morals and religion. By whatever name called, it is that instinctive faculty of the human soul which distinguishes between right and wrong; which, as the vicegerent of God, approves and condemns, rewards and punishes. Men may learn to stop their ears against the voice of conscience by a long course of sinful indulgences, they may sear it as with a hot iron, but they cannot get rid of it. It will remain in their bosoms, and make its voice heard sooner or later.

In early life, the conscience is exceedingly tender, and under

the auspices of a religious education gains such strength and sway that, however impenetrable the heart may be, the conscience is sure to be highly susceptible. And if, later in life, it does not drive men to the discharge of religious duties, it often keeps them back from presumptuous sins. It will not let them go all lengths to which their depraved inclinations would hurry them; and when they violently break over the boundary, it often scourges them back with a whip of scorpions.

Nor is this all. Conscience not only restrains men from the outbreak of evil passions, but constrains them to the performance of many religious duties. The sinner is awakened. He sees that he is condemned by the law of God, but his heart rebels against it, as too strict and severe; he would gladly dismiss the subject without doing any thing to obtain pardon, but his conscience will not let him. It enforces upon him the justice of his condemnation. He must do something to escape from the wrath to come; and under this constraint, he not only breaks off from sinful practices, if he had been addicted to them, but betakes himself to the performance of religions duties. His heart is as reluctant as ever; but his conscience tells him there is no other way. He becomes a regular attendant upon public worship, reads the Scriptutes, prays in his closet, and perhaps in his family, and his pious friends begin to speak of him as a new man. But it is all up-hill work. He would not stir a step if conscience did not goad him on. When he grows remiss in his external duties, the same faithful monitor startles him by its admonitions, and he returns to them again and again, till he begins to think himself a Christian. Not because he loves God, and loves the Saviour, and loves prayer, but because he is a *reformed* man, approves the right and condemns the wrong, and does "many things." He sees, as he did not use to see, that the requirements of the law and the gospel are right and reasonable. He cannot help it. His conscience being awakened, the light of truth will shine, he cannot shut it out, and he takes up the notion that he must be a converted man; when let the pressure be taken off, he would relapse at once. This is what I mean by the religion of conscience. Thousands, I am afraid, rest here and perish.

Nay, this religion finds its way into the Church. Many who, there is reason to fear, have no true piety in their hearts, retain "the form of godliness," and keep their hopes alive by the mere force of an enlightened conscience. Knowing what they ought to be, there is a constant struggle going on between their unsanctified hearts and their convictions of duty. When they become remiss, conscience remonstrates, and there is a forced return. Thus they vacillate. And they mistake these alternations for the Christian warfare, "the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh." This is what I mean by the religion of conscience in the Church. It is, where a professor, desti-

tute of true love to God, is rebuked when he relapses, and has his false hopes kept alive by the chiding and goading of that inward monitor, whose voice so often startles them from their slumbers. They mistake their convictions for that love which is the fulfilling of the law. The mistake is, that though the moral sense is right, the heart is wrong.

VI. Next in my arrangement of topics, comes the *Religion of the Natural Affections*. Man is born for society. He is a social as well as a moral being. In his primitive state of perfect holiness, his religious and natural affections dwelt together in the most delightful harmony. If he had kept his first estate, there would never have been any jar. But he fell. Blessed be God, his natural affections, though paralyzed and greatly perverted, survived the shock, and families are still bound together by a thousand endearing ties. They know that they love each other, and that in this they are obeying the will of God, as well as the spontaneous impulses of their own hearts. Now, while there is little danger that moroseness will be mistaken for piety any where, there is great danger, where the social affections are strongly developed in the most disinterested and lovely forms, that they will be mistaken for religious affections, and we are sure they often are.

Here is one of the kindest husbands and fondest fathers, perhaps, in the land. There is nothing which he would not do or suffer for his family. He knows that he loves them with all his heart, and they know it, for he shows it in a thousand ways; and very likely, if he gives himself any concern about religion, he may think this is enough without inquiring any further. He may expect to be saved because he is so good a husband and father, while he has no regard to the law of God, and no true Christian benevolence in his heart. He may be a profane swearer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or a Gallio. He may be a duellist even, and be ready under any slight provocation to go from the embraces of his family to the field of blood, and yet think he has too kind and affectionate a heart to be lost.

Or, if he does not lay much stress upon it himself, his family and other friends may a great deal, especially after he is removed from them by the stroke of death. He may not have left the least evidence of piety, in the evangelical sense; and indeed, much to the contrary. But he was so affectionate, so indulgent, so self-sacrificing, and expressed such a tender concern for his wife and children on his death-bed, that they cannot for a moment think he is lost. God must and will overlook his infirmities, since there was so much in him to love and admire. He loved his own dear ones too well to be rejected as a reprobate. Thus they solace themselves under the bereavement.

So in all the other family relations, where the domestic affections are strongly developed. For example, here is a daughter,

amiable, obedient, and affectionate; the pride of her doting parents; so lovely that she seems to have almost escaped the contamination of the fall. She is all they could wish in the domestic circle, and why is not this religion enough for one so young and so faultless? Why should we talk to her about the necessity of having a new heart? Such a daughter was once awakened, and came to me with the great question, "What must I do to be saved?" I gave her the best advice I could, and she went home with a burdened conscience. Her doting mother, a professor of religion too, was grieved and alarmed when she ascertained the case. "What have you ever done, my dear S., that you should give way to this distress? You have been to us the best of daughters, every body loves you, and what change do you need to make you better? Dismiss your fears and be happy." By the grace of God, this cruel interference was overruled. The daughter saw that she was a lost sinner, and, as we hoped, soon after came as a penitent to the foot of the cross.

Now, suppose she had died before she was awakened, how confident would her mother have been in her good estate, solely on the ground of her being so amiable and affectionate a daughter. Had she been cut down as a flower in all her natural loveliness, her sorrowing parents would have been ready thus to bemoan, or rather to comfort themselves: "Oh, how lovely she was! Never did a more affectionate heart beat in any human bosom. She was so gentle, so pure, so sweet, as she faded away! It was not fitting that she should stay in this rough world, and God has taken her to himself. She is an angel!" Thus thousands are sent to heaven, by heart-stricken relatives, in funeral addresses, obituary notices, and pious epitaphs, simply because they possessed too many domestic affections and virtues to be lost. I pass now,

VII. To the *Religion of Morality*. There are a great many strictly and scrupulously moral men, who do not belong to any church, nor make any pretensions to experimental religion. No profane word ever drops from their lips. No stain of inebriety was ever found upon their garments. Their word is proverbially as good as their bond. They are professedly upright in all their dealings. You might, with entire confidence, put all your money into their hands uncounted. Of not a farthing would they wrong you. You could not, on your death-bed, confide the settlement of your estate to safer hands. In a word, they are not surpassed in moral character by the strictest members of the church. They are regarded every where in this light. They have that "good name which is better than precious ointment." They "live in all good conscience" before men, and are ready to submit their characters to the most searching investigation. They are moralists upon principle, as well as worldly policy. And this is their religion. It is the whole of it. By it they expect to be justified before God. By their works, and not

by the blood of Christ, they expect to be saved; for they have never seen "the plague of their own hearts." They are kind to the sick and the poor. They "do good to all as they have opportunity," and you cannot convince them that there is any essential deficiency in their religion. They overlook the *spirit* of the law, and rely upon the *letter*. With the young ruler, they are ready to say, "All these things have we kept from our youth up: what lack we yet?" You cannot convince them that love to God and faith in Christ are essential. They cannot, they will not believe that, after leading such blameless and useful lives, God will cast them off for ever. Alas! how fatally are they deceived, in thus "going about to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God."

VIII. Let us now, for a moment or two, glance at the *Religion of Animal Excitement*. The healthy action of the human mind depends upon the subordination and harmony of all its powers; and so critically balanced and adjusted are our intellectual, moral, and animal susceptibilities, that this harmony is constantly in danger of being disturbed. Now the nervous excitability is much greater in some individuals than in others. Some are constitutionally cool, reflective, and self-possessed. In them the reasoning faculty predominates. They are not destitute of emotion, but it lies deep, and requires strong appeals to the understanding and conscience to draw it out. They are not roused till they can see some reason why they should be. And this coolness is not confined to any one class of emotions. On all subjects they are accustomed to be governed, not by feeling, but by argument and persuasion. When you see them excited, you may be sure that something more than sound has done it.

But other persons are the mere creatures of impulse. Nothing is easier than to excite them, for their susceptibilities lie all upon the surface. They can be excited to laugh or weep with about the same facility, and often pass in a moment from one of these states to the other. Of course, when their attention is arrested by fervid religious appeals, and these appliances are continued for some time, and without much discrimination, they are liable to have their minds wrought up to a feverish intensity, and to mistake mere temporary nervousness for a saving change of heart. They are certain that they feel as they never felt before. The whole current of their thoughts is turned into a new channel. They see every thing in a new light, and it is easy to persuade them that they are truly converted. Such cases sometimes occur under the most judicious and scriptural exhibitions of divine truth, and where no appeals are made to the passions. How much more when persons of a warm and quick temperament are brought under the high pressure of fear, by the loud and impassioned appeals of religious teachers, whose "zeal is not according to knowledge."

I am no enemy to religious excitement, properly directed, as I shall show. But when individuals of highly sensitive nerves are so unhappy as to fall into the hands of ardent and shallow declaimers, when every thing that is said is directly calculated to disturb the healthy action of the mind, and produce mere animal excitement, what dependence can be placed upon the loudest shouts of glory, or the highest assurance that all is well?

In certain stages of a powerful revival, nothing is easier than to excite groans, and outcries, and confusion, by vehement and enthusiastic addresses to the passions of the multitude. Under such preaching, thousands have been pronounced converted, who have in a few months relapsed into their former stupidity, or still lower. A great many who thought themselves converted have afterwards declared, in their soberest moments, that it was all a *delusion*, mere animal feeling, which at the time they mistook for a change of heart. And multitudes, there is reason to fear, having passed through a similar process, under misguided teachers, settle down upon a false hope. All their religion consists in thinking how they once felt, or in such occasional excitements as I have just described. Holy love is entirely wanting. It was never "shed abroad in their hearts!" When they die, all their religion dies too, and is buried with them.

If, then, there was not something more and something better than the religion of the eye and the ear, of forms and ceremonies, of the intellect, of the imagination, of conscience, of the natural affections, of morality, or of animal excitement, or of all these combined, we might well despair of salvation. What will it avail our disembodied spirits at the bar of God, that our eyes and ears once revelled in all the glories of the creation and the thousand melodies of nature and of art? what, that we had been ever so observant of forms and ceremonies? what, that we had admired and embraced the most orthodox system of doctrines that can be found in any creed? what, that our consciences had always been on the side of God and of truth? what, that our social affections had been developed in ever so many pure and lovely forms? what, that we had kept the whole letter of the law, and not offended even in one point? what, that our mere animal feelings had been ever so highly or so often wrought up on the subject of religion? What can it all avail us, if we have gone no further? We shall then be speechless, however we may deceive and flatter ourselves now. The deluge of sin has covered the earth, has risen above the tops of the highest mountains. We are buffeted and tossed upon the angry flood, and have been looking out from the wrecks which are ready to founder for an ark of safety, but hitherto all in vain. Blessed be God, it is coming in sight, however, and we may yet be saved. While all other hopes and dependences fail, there is a religion which will carry us safely to heaven. We

come to it now, in the *last place;* and it is nothing more nor less than

The Religion of the Heart.

The heart, and the heart alone, is the seat of the religious affections; of holy love, of faith, of every pious emotion. By nature the heart of every man is wrong, is sinful, is full of evil; and it is never right till renewed by the Holy Spirit. A man's heart is right when he exercises right affections towards God, towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and towards his fellow-men. The essence of true religion is holy love, delight in the character of God, in his law, in Christ as all our salvation and all our desire, and in the fellowship of those who bear his image. Wherever this divine love exists, the heart is right, is regenerate; for "whosoever loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." But whatever other religion any one may possess, let him be assured that he lacks the "one thing needful." It may be this "form of godliness," or that, or the other, but it lacks "the power." True religion is something which will endure the ordeal of death, something which we can take along with us into the other world; and what can this be but love? Nothing but love, or a right state of heart, which is the same thing, can fit us for heaven. "Charity (love) never faileth; but whether there be prophets, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." All else but love is the garniture of religion in the present state of our being. And without this love, without "holiness," for the terms are synonymous, "no man shall see the Lord."

Suppose you could follow into the future world a man of the most exalted genius, of the largest knowledge, of the most spotless moral character, with all the advantages for happiness which could be enumerated, save just this one thing, "the love of God shed abroad in his heart:" oh, what a wretched creature would he be; what a miserable eternity would spread out before him! His organs of sense, which afforded him so much pleasure here, he has left in the grave. His social affections are for ever extinguished. All the goodly apparel of outward morality fell off from him with the garments which he exchanged for a shroud. His intellect, his memory, his conscience, he has indeed carried with him; but oh! how much better, had it been possible, to have left them all behind, for they will only aggravate his eternal punishment.

But here let me not be misunderstood. When I say that the religion of the heart is the *only* true religion, and that all the other religions in the world can never carry a man to heaven, I am very far from asserting or believing that it rejects the alliance of the eye and the ear, of the intellect, imagination, conscience, outward morality, the social affections, or excitement. On the contrary, I believe that most of these are essential to a healthy and vigorous piety, and that all of them, when kept in due subordina-

tion, aid and quicken its growth. True religion elevates, ennobles, and purifies all the human faculties.

So far is the devout Christian from shutting his *eyes* to the beauties of nature, or turning away his *ear* from its sweet harmonies, that the more devout he is, the more he enjoys them all. He sees the wisdom, power, and goodness of God in every thing around him, as he never saw them till he was brought out of darkness into marvellous light; and lifting up his eyes to the sparkling heavens, "looking through nature up to nature's God," he exclaims, "My Father made them all."

So of *intellect*, *perceptions*, and *pleasures*. If man were not endowed with a rational soul, he could have no religion at all; for he could have no knowledge of the great and glorious truths which lie at the very foundation. But the truly regenerated man sees moral relations with a peculiar clearness. There is more of intellect, more of well-balanced reason in his convictions than there ever was before; for the eyes of his understanding, which sin had blinded, are enlightened by the Spirit of God. The essential difference, in this respect, between his present and former state, is that then his religion was at best a cold speculative orthodoxy, with which the heart had nothing to do, but now his intellect is warmed and enlightened by Divine love.

So again of *imagination*. The religion of the heart does not destroy this faculty, nor refuse its alliance. It only sanctifies it, and holds it in check with a golden thread, as it were, when it would run wild and mock the mind with mere airy conceits. I can see no reason why imagination, under the control of perfect holiness, may not be a source of pure enjoyment in heaven, as I am sure in the present world it may be one of the handmaids of religion, though it can never be a substitute for it.

And *conscience*, certainly, is a most watchful supervisor of our religious thoughts, words, and actions. Though yielding to its remonstrances, and doing many things to appease its troublesome importunity, is no certain evidence of piety, on the other hand, stifling its honest voice is a proof of the contrary. The most devoted Christians are the most conscientious men. A good conscience is an essential part of true religion, while at the same time it can never be a substitute for right affections of the heart. However wide awake the conscience may be, in the absence of holy love there is no meetness for the kingdom of heaven. Beyond a doubt, the consciences of the wicked will be more active and goading than ever in the world of despair.

So again, although the *social affections* are not saving, nothing purifies and sweetens them like true religion. It makes men better and happier in all the endearing relations of life. These affections, even when unsanctified, act a most important part in families, neighborhoods, and larger communities. Human existence would be intolerable, and I may add, impossible, without them.

Still, they are not identical with true godliness. The strongest social affections, as every body knows, do not necessarily exclude envy, pride, revenge, or any other sinful passion, from the human bosom.

Once more, while the strictest *morality* cannot save any man, the religion of the heart is so far from repudiating it, that it is essential to true piety. The heart cannot be right, where the life is bad. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart will bring forth that which is good." Wherever you find an individual of loose and convenient morals, however loud his professions of inward experience may be, depend upon it, he is no Christian. "The love of God is not in him." "Without works, faith is dead, being alone."

I have only to add, lest I should be misunderstood on a very important point, that true religion does not forbid *excitement*. Men *must* be excited, must be deeply interested, before they will give their minds wholly to any subject. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to make an exception with regard to religion, the most momentous of all subjects. Much as we may regret noise and extravagance, we must not infer that there can be no genuine conversions where there is much animal excitement. Man was made to feel, to fear, to shrink from danger and suffering; and when he sees the greatest of all dangers clearly, how can he help trembling? The three thousand who cried out on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" were highly excited. So was Paul on his way to Damascus; so was the jailor at Philippi; and so have thousands of others, in view of their guilt and danger, been excited to flee from the wrath to come. The true ground of objection is, not that sinners should be excited by setting life and death before them, but that their passions are ever appealed to rather than their understandings and consciences; and thus many, as I have already said, there is reason to fear, are led to mistake a temporary excitement for saving conversion to God.

Thus you see that it comes at last to this: It is the state of your hearts, and nothing external, which constitutes your true characters, as moral and accountable beings in the sight of a holy God. Are you then, in heart and soul, his friend? Do you delight in his law, after the inner man? Do you love him for his infinite moral excellency, for his holiness as well as his goodness, for his hatred of sin as well as his love of righteousness?

Are your hearts right with the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love and trust in him, as a Divine and Almighty Saviour? When he comes and knocks at your door, do your hearts leap for joy? Do you welcome him, as your dearest friend, to "come in, and sup with you, and you with him?"

Are your hearts right towards the Holy Sanctifier and Comforter? Do you feel your absolute need of the Spirit to help your

infirmities and to give you the victory over all your spiritual enemies? And do you heartily pray for his assistance?

Are your hearts right with your fellow-men? Does the golden rule govern you? Do you delight in offices of kindness and benevolence? Do you love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you? If your *hearts* are *right*, every thing else will be right, of course. If your hearts are not right, then all else is wrong or fatally defective.

SERMON DLXXII.

BY REV. WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D.D.,

ALBANY, N. Y.

THE GOLDEN CALF.

"They made a calf in Horeb."—PSALM CVI. 19.

THE event here referred to, with its attending circumstances, you may find narrated at length in the thirty-second chapter of the book of Exodus. The substance of the narrative is this: The people of Israel were encamped at the foot of Sinai, and they had just witnessed those terrible exhibitions of Divine power and majesty which had preceded the giving of the law. The thunder, and the lightning, and the earthquake, all those fearful tokens of God's presence, were then but a thing of the other day; and it were reasonable to suppose that the impression which they had produced on the minds of those who had witnessed them was as deep and vivid as ever. Moreover, the people had just entered into a solemn covenant with God to obey his commandments: they had done this not merely through Moses, as their representative, or through the elders, but we are expressly informed that "all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." But while Moses was yet in the mount, receiving the wonderful communications which God was making to him, that same congregation which had just before been overwhelmed by the tokens of the Divine majesty, and had solemnly covenanted to obey the divine law, yielded not only to a spirit of murmuring, but to a spirit of idolatry: they became impatient on account of the long absence of Moses, and called upon Aaron to make them gods, under whose guidance they might proceed on their way. Aaron, either because he shared the same spirit with themselves, or because he had not firmness enough to act in opposition to it, yielded to the mad proposal; and actually made them a molten calf out of the ear-rings which, at his own suggestion, had been contributed for the purpose. And that idol

they profoundly worshipped, recognizing it as the god which had brought them out of the land of Egypt. The living and true God, who was the witness of this strange scene, apprised his servant Moses of what was passing among his people; and but for the respect which He paid to *his* intercessions, He would have consumed them at once in his righteous displeasure. Moses forthwith descended from the mount; and as he approached the camp, he found them actually engaged in their idolatrous worship—in dancing before the idol. His first business was to destroy the idol itself; his next was to punish the idolaters. He charged the sons of Levi to go forth from gate to gate through the camp, slaying every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor, throughout the camp, till the offenders should all have expiated their crime with their blood. And this work of death was straightway accomplished. It was, indeed, a fearful punishment; but it was a fearful crime, and a crime committed under fearfully aggravated circumstances, which drew it upon them.

Let us see what instruction we can gather from this impressive portion of sacred history.

I. The circumstances of the Israelites at Horeb were strikingly analogous to the circumstances of a large portion of mankind at the present day; and that in two respects.

In the first place, the Israelites had witnessed to a terrific display of the Divine character: particularly the attributes of sovereignty, and justice, and holiness, and truth, had been set forth in the most impressive manner, so as to come in contact not only with the thoughts, the feelings, but the very senses. The lightning, the thunder, the earthquake, each always tells of the Divine majesty; but in this case, these were miraculous signals of the Divine presence: the Creator was using his own elements to testify to the world of his own purity and greatness. Now I say there is something quite analogous to this in the experience of many at the present day; I may say, in the experience of most at some period or other, especially of those who live under the sound of the gospel.

The world in which we live is a world of graves; a world of desolate and bleeding hearts; a world which has been undergoing a baptism of tears ever since it became the dwelling-place of moral evil. And if some have a greater share of sorrow than others, yet none are entirely exempt; and even in those cases in which there are the fewest external demonstrations of woe, it is still true that the heart knoweth its own bitterness. I know that, in saying this, I speak to the experience of every one of you: for you have at some time or other, and in some form or other, had the bitter cup at your lips; and whether you have been sensible of it or not, you have, on every such occasion, been standing within sight of mount Horeb; you have witnessed to a direct

expression of the justice and the holiness of God; in the heaving of your dejected spirit, in every tear that you have shed upon the ruin of your earthly hopes, God has declared himself a righteous, a sin-avenging God. For natural evil comes in the train of moral evil, according to the divine ordinance; suffering is the penalty which God's justice has affixed to sin; and though that penalty be only meted out in a small degree in the present life, yet the least degree of it testifies to the respect which God bears for his own character and law; it helps to illustrate the apostle's declaration, "Our God is a consuming fire." Remember then, ye who have been in the furnace, no matter though you may have come out of it as gold seven times purified, ye have had a practical demonstration that there are other attributes belonging to the Divine character than goodness and mercy. You have had evidence which it is not easy to resist, that justice and judgment are the habitation of Jehovah's throne.

Wherever the gospel is faithfully preached in all its doctrines and precepts and connections, there again the hearer is brought to the foot of the mount; he may, if he will, see the lightning and hear the thunder that issues from the secret place of God's majesty. For the true gospel is not preached, where God is represented only in the mildness of his paternal character. He is a Lawgiver and a Judge as well as a Father; and whoever dwells upon the latter character to the exclusion of the former ones, or whoever works up a discrepancy between them with a view to cast the former into the shade, is chargeable with making God altogether such an one as himself. If the gospel is preached in all its various parts, those attributes which carry alarm to the sinner will be found to connect themselves, either directly or indirectly, with every doctrine and every precept. The law, of course, will be proclaimed as the basis of all God's subsequent revelations to the world; that very law, the promulgation of which was the occasion of those terrific exhibitions on the mount. The corruption of the human heart will be proclaimed, and there is something judicial in that; for, to say nothing here of the connection that exists between the guilt of the first transgressor and the corruption of his posterity, God's punishment of the sinner begins here, in leaving him to his own evil courses—to treasure up to himself wrath against the day of wrath. The doctrine of future and eternal retribution will be proclaimed; for not only is it written in sunbeams that God will render to every man according to his work, but also, more definitely, that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. The doctrine of redemption through the blood of Christ will be proclaimed, and in connection with it the necessity of faith in that blood, in order that the redemption may take effect; and here again God's justice comes out in the necessity that existed for an atonement, as well as in the limitation of the ulti-

mate benefits of this atonement to those who believe. In short, the hearer of the true gospel lives in the atmosphere of Sinai, as well as of Calvary; he hears of the justice and truth of God, as well as of his mercy; and if he do not stand in awe of the sterner attributes, as well as rejoice in the milder, then you may be assured that he is hearing the gospel to no purpose: he has not even begun to comprehend its true import.

It pleases God sometimes to give to his Word, extensively, a powerful effect; to awaken a large community to deep reflection and earnest inquiry; insomuch that, for a time, the one thing needful becomes the all-engrossing object. And what is the effect that is actually produced in such a case? Why, it is, that men are brought into more immediate contact with God. The conscience is awake; and God's justice is blazing upon it with a degree of power which it ill knows how to bear. You see those around you, who have been accustomed to wear a look of hilarity, and perhaps, when serious subjects were introduced, to wear a look of scorn, bowed down to the dust, incapable of labor or rest, because it seems to them as if God's righteous indignation were consuming their spirits. Now I will suppose you to be a mere spectator of such a scene as this, without actually participating in it; I say it brings you within sight of the burning mount—within hearing of the thunders that roll upon its summit. All that you witness in that awakened, distressed community, each bleeding heart, each supplicating voice, each falling tear, tells that God is communing with the conscience in the character of a Lawgiver and a Judge; and that He is writing his commandments with his own finger on the innermost part of the soul, as truly as He wrote them on the tables of stone. You may form whatever opinion you will of what you see passing around you; you may even ridicule it as nothing better than a fanatic's ravings or an idiot's dream; but all this does not change or even modify the actual reality. You are really witnessing a scene in which the just, the holy, the faithful God is speaking to you, to you personally, in a voice of thunder.

I only add, in illustration of this point, that every twinge of remorse in the sinner's own bosom, no matter by what means or under what circumstances it may have been produced, has the same solemn significance; it recognizes the justice and purity of God, and proclaims that it will be a fearful thing to the sinner to fall into his hands. You come to church, perhaps, merely from habit, or from curiosity, or from some other unworthy consideration, and when the sermon begins, you are as listless as the seat you occupy; but in the progress of it some word is spoken that carries tumult and terror into your inmost soul, and you feel as if you were in the act of being arraigned for your final trial. You have performed some equivocal, perhaps worse than equivocal act; you have violated some one of God's commandments, it may

be in a flagrant manner, and you did it deliberately and with your eyes open: that act returns upon you in your nightly dreams, and sleep departs from your eyes, and terror takes possession of your spirit; and in spite of all your reasonings, and all your resolves to the contrary, you are obliged to feel that, for the time at least, you have fallen into the hands of God's justice. When you performed the act, God was not in all your thoughts; but afterwards He forced his way into your thoughts, and you found that the lightnings of his wrath were flashing through the secret chambers of your soul. All this may have quickly passed away, and possibly you may think of it now only as a pitiable delusion; but the day will come when you will know, beyond a peradventure, that you were then in the neighborhood of mount Horeb; will know that the bitter experience of that hour was a demonstration to you of your guilt, and ought to have led you to betake yourself to that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

The other circumstance to which I referred in the condition of the Israelites, as analogous to what exists in respect to multitudes at the present day, is that they had entered into covenant with God. They had just given their solemn affirmative response to God's covenant, as it had been read to them by Moses; and they were bound by every consideration of honor, of gratitude, of duty, to obey it.

In like manner, there are multitudes at this day all over Christendom, who have professed not only a belief in the Divine testimony, but obedience to the Divine precepts. Here in this very community there is a large number of this description; men and women who have professedly come out from the world, and renounced its evil practices, and solemnly pledged themselves to Him who searches the heart that they will endeavor to live a godly life, in the strength of his grace and to the glory of his name. These have entered into covenant with God formally; and they have done it practically and spiritually too, unless their hope is delusion, or their profession hypocrisy. And there are a multitude of others, who make no formal profession of faith or obedience; and yet by their attendance on the ordinances of Christ's house, and the reverence which they express for religious institutions, they virtually acknowledge their belief in the truth and the importance of Christianity; and in refusing to confess Christ's name before men, they certainly convict themselves of inconsistency, while they in nowise escape from the obligation of subscribing formally to the Christian covenant. In a modified sense, then, we may include all those who in any way manifest their respect for Christian institutions in the class which we are now considering; the class between whose circumstances and those of the Israelites at mount Horeb there is at least a general analogy.

II. Let us now, in the second place, consider the conduct of the Israelites in making and worshipping the calf, in those peculiar

circumstances, as analogous to much that is passing in the world around us. What rendered the conduct of the Israelites so exceedingly strange and criminal, you observe, was, that it should have occurred amidst the awful scenes of Horeb. Perhaps there are some who marvel at this, who, if they will search diligently within, will find, not indeed the very same thing, but the very same spirit, to marvel at in their own experience.

You have been sitting under the preaching of the gospel from the time that you were able to understand it; its doctrines and precepts, its promises and threatenings, have been set before you in every variety of form; while you have always had the written Word within your reach, with every facility for studying and understanding it. And thus you have been brought as near to God, though in a different way, as the Israelites were when they were round about Horeb. And what demonstrations have you made in these circumstances? Why, you have been guilty of idolatry just as truly as the Israelites were; you have worshipped gold just as truly as they did; and the fact that they chose the form of a calf, and you choose some other form, makes no difference as to the actual guilt in the eye of Heaven. Are there not those here whose consciences assure them at this moment that they can only plead guilty to this charge; who, if they notice what is passing within, even now, while they are in the house o God, will find that they are in the actual exercise of this idolatry; that while they appear to every eye, but that which looks at the heart, to be decent worshippers, they are really projecting or carrying out in their thoughts some plan which is to result in the enlargement of their worldly possessions? Or possibly something beside gold may become the object of the ruling passion: it may be honor; it may be splendor; it may be influence; it may be mere intellectual acquirement; it may be any thing, save the one only living and true God. But no matter what it is, if it becomes an object of supreme regard, then the regard that is paid to it is idolatry; and though you may profess to pity the poor heathen, who in their blindness worship images of wood and of stone, yet He who views things just as they are, knows that you are as truly an object of pity as they, and on substantially the same grounds. You have your idols with you always and every where. You cannot rest if they are not under your pillow; you are willing to come to the house of God only on condition that they come along with you. The labor of your hands, the labor of your thoughts, the labor of your affections, all, all is idolatry.

Time has been when God's hand rested heavily upon you, and death perhaps came up into your very chamber, and you saw some one dressed for the grave—carried to the grave—for whom you felt that you could have given even your life. But this affliction found you a worshipper of the world, and it had no effect in rendering you permanently otherwise. For a little time, perhaps,

it checked the current of worldliness; you staid away for a few days or weeks from the scenes of your accustomed gayety; you seemed to relax a little in the eager pursuit of honor; your conversation was not so extensively upon projects for amassing wealth; but the passion was far enough from being rooted out, as is proved by the fact that it has since revived with more than its former energy. You may, for aught I know, have formed some good resolution at the grave of that friend; but the world has already shown itself too strong for it, and those who see you now would not even suspect that your idolatry had ever undergone even a temporary check.

You have sometimes had your lot cast in the midst of the effusions of God's Holy Spirit; and go where you might, the anxious inquiry on the one side, and the song of thanksgiving on the other, was falling upon your ear. But neither the one nor the other was heard to escape *your* lips. You clung to your idols with a tenacity which defied all human power. What mattered it to you whether men were saved or lost; whether God's Spirit was poured out or was withheld? You had your golden calf, and that was enough for *you;* and worship it you would, worship it you did, in spite of all the voices that were lifted up to protest against your folly. And to this hour, do I wrong you when I say that you love the world as well, follow it as eagerly, hug it as closely, as if you had not been brought in contact with that scene of Divine wonders? There was a power then that subdued and renovated many hearts, and its triumph and operations were gratefully responded to by angelic songs; but, alas! it touched not your idolatrous heart. The field of your vision, the object of your desires and efforts, is still the world, the world, and nothing but the world.

But there have been times, after all, when the inward monitor, God's representative, God's witness in the soul, has not slept. Perhaps you could not tell why, but he has been awake, and one part of his office has been to curse your idolatry, and bid you think of it in connection with the judgment. You reflected, you trembled, possibly you resolved; and then you bowed down to your idol again. And that idol is still in your heart, and before your eyes every hour. You have not enough of the world—of its riches, of its honors, of its pleasures; you are always stretching out your hands for more; and though your heart in its inmost aspirations responds to God's sentence that all this is vanity, yet, after all, you seem to say, "Vanity though it be, let me have it for my portion!" In each of these several cases, wherein, I ask, are ye better than were the Israelites, at the foot of the mount, shouting and dancing in honor of the golden calf?

Or it may be you are one of those who have actually, by a public profession, joined yourself to the number of God's people; and you are accustomed to mingle with them in the commemo-

ration of your Redeemer's death, thus proclaiming in the most decisive manner that you regard yourself on the Lord's side. But after all, those who saw that you were an idolater before, see that you are an idolater still; no one can listen to your habitual conversation, no one can notice the tenor of your daily conduct, without perceiving that the world has the throne within. Your name stands as fair on the church-record as any other; but those who witness your deportment would require other evidence of the fact than that furnishes. You are regularly in the church, and here, perhaps, you may seem devout; you are regularly at the communion table, and there is nothing in your appearance there to indicate that your heart is not full of the love of Jesus Christ: but the truth is, you are playing the worldling both in the one case and in the other; you worship the golden calf, not only at the foot of mount Horeb, but at the foot of mount Calvary also. In a word, you are professedly in covenant with God, but really in league with the world; professedly a follower of Christ, but really a worshipper of Mammon. Is not this idolatry, equal at least to that which the Jews exhibited in the case we are contemplating?

III. The guilt of the Israelites in making and worshipping the golden calf was not a little enhanced by the peculiar circumstances under which the sin was committed; and there is a corresponding aggravation from a similar cause attending many of those idolatrous attachments which are often witnessed in our day.

It would have been bad enough for the people of Israel to have been guilty of this sin on any other spot than at the foot of Horeb: had it occurred while they were yet under the dominion of Pharaoh, and constantly in contact with the various forms of Egyptian idolatry, it would certainly have been less remarkable; though even in that case, inasmuch as they had knowledge of the true God, it would have been without the semblance of a valid excuse. But from the time that they had cut loose from the Egyptian tyrant, they had been the witnesses of an uninterrupted miraculous agency: it was by a miracle that they had been conducted to the spot where they then were; a few days before they had witnessed that tremendous manifestation of Divine power which proclaimed that God was on the mount; and at that very moment their illustrious commander, as they perfectly well knew, was, almost within speaking distance of them, holding high intercourse with Jehovah as their representative and organ. The circumstance then that aggravated their guilt was, that the sin was committed while they were, I had almost said, in very contact with Deity. Every thing around them told of the Divine presence; every thing that they saw and heard was adapted to dissuade them from this impious outrage. And yet they heeded it not: they became idolaters, gross idolaters, within the sound of Jehovah's voice, within the very blaze of his glory.

Nor is the case dissimilar, as it is often witnessed at the present day; may I not say, as it is often witnessed among ourselves? True, indeed, God speaks not now, as formerly, in miraculous tones; but He speaks as truly now by his providence, by his Word, by his Spirit, as He once did in the suspension of the laws which He had himself established. He spoke to you from the bed of sickness, or from the glooms of bereavement; but you rose from your sick-bed, or came back from the grave, as devoted an idolater as ever. He has been speaking to you all your life through the preaching of the Word, and all the ordinances of religion; but not one word of all that He hath said has ever been heeded by you as a rebuke to your worldly attachments. He has spoken to you from out of the depths of many an inquiring spirit, from amidst the transports of many a regenerated spirit, perhaps from the temporary suspension of a reigning worldliness throughout an entire community; but even *such* a scene has passed away, leaving you as eager in the pursuit of the world as it found you. He has spoken sometimes through the voice of your own conscience, in that sense of vanity and worthlessness which you have sometimes been obliged to feel in the wreck of your earthly hopes; in those deep inward misgivings, and rebukes, and mysterious writhings, which have shadowed forth the awful future: but even these terrific remonstrances against your course have not arrested you; you have stifled the voice from within, and have gone forth welcoming the world to your bosom as cordially as ever. I say then that you, not less than the Israelites, have been sinning while God has been very near to you. You as truly as they have been idolaters, are still idolaters, amid scenes which ought to overwhelm you with a sense of the Divine presence; and whether this circumstance must not materially aggravate your guilt and condemnation, judge ye.

IV. God did not suffer this sin of the Israelites to go unpunished; neither can those who are guilty of a similar sin at the present day expect to escape punishment.

The first part of their punishment consisted in the destruction of their idol. Moses, when he came down from the mount, and saw the disgusting form which they had profanely substituted in place of the living and true God, moved with holy indignation instantly destroyed it. We are told that "He took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." By mingling this powder with their drink, he signified to them that all their enjoyments would be embittered by the curse which they had thereby brought upon themselves. It would enter into their bones like oil; do what they might to dislodge it, it would still remain to mar their best enjoyments.

And do we not often witness substantially the same thing at the present day? Nay, does not this conduct of God towards

the Israelites illustrate a general principle of his administration? I know that the devotee of wealth sometimes retains his wealth, till it drops away into other hands because death has palsied his own. I know that the man whose course through the world is an unbroken and successful strife for worldly honor, sometimes finds his laurels as flourishing as ever up to the moment of his entering the dark valley. I know that the sensual, and the pleasure-loving, and the splendor-loving, sometimes imagine an undiminished brightness in their prospects, till, as if in the twinkling of an eye, a thick darkness falls upon their path, which proves, alas! to be the darkness in which the monster comes to do his work. But, after all, I appeal to you whether any thing is more common than for God to come and burn your idols before your eyes, and then mingle the dust of them in your very drink? Have you not found that the things of earth in which you have trusted have often proved as deceitful as the meteor; that the cup of pleasure, of which you expected to drink till you were satisfied, has sometimes been dashed from your lips and a cup of gall substituted in its place? How often have I heard the fond parent, whose heart has been bleeding under the loss of a beloved child, exclaim, "Oh! it was my idol; I trusted in it; and now that it is taken from me, whither shall I look for consolation?" I am speaking of the destruction of idols as a punishment: it is so in one sense, but in another it is a blessing; for any thing that transfers the affections from the creature to the Creator is a blessing, even though it be the withering of the best and the last of our earthly hopes.

But Moses did more than put the idol out of the way: he instituted a terrible work of death in respect to the idolaters. The command to the sons of Levi was, that they should "put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor;" and we are told that "the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." If you say that this was a severe punishment, we answer that even Moses was not responsible for it; for it was ordained immediately by Jehovah, and the order for the execution of it which Moses gave was prefaced with "Thus saith the Lord."

It happens, not unfrequently, that men who persevere in idolatrous attachments, especially amidst signal demonstrations of their worthlessness, not only have their idols broken or burned before their eyes, but are subjected to other and more terrible marks of the Divine displeasure. Sometimes God performs a mighty retributive work in the sinner's bosom through the power of conscience, and months and years of unmitigated inward torture seem to change life itself into a living death. Sometimes persons of this character are cut off in so sudden and striking a manner,

that, though we may not venture to say it, we can hardly suppress the conviction that there is something judicial in the circumstances of their death. And though we cannot follow them beyond the vail, though we cannot see those fires of Divine wrath which were typified on the burning mount, and which act with an all-powerful and yet an unconsuming energy upon the immortal soul, still we do know that in that invisible world God reigns in all the terrors of his justice; that there is suffering there, such as it has not entered the mind of man to conceive; and that the measure of suffering is meted out according to the measure of aggravation by which a sinful course has been marked. It was a terrible hour when the sons of Levi addressed themselves to that work of death in the Israelitish camp; when they went round from gate to gate, leaving their companions as they passed writhing in the last agony: but even that scene, terrific as it was, were not worthy to be considered in comparison with those invisible retributive scenes, in which God's justice has its more immediate and complete operation. I refer you to God's own Word for a description of the woes which he has treasured up for those who secure no portion beyond the world; and he who can read that description and remain unmoved, must have nerves of iron, and sinews of brass, and an adamantine heart, that will withstand every thing but the fire of God's wrath kindled in his soul.

And now, who of you will be contented to cling to the riches of earth, and let go the riches of heaven; to seek the honor that cometh from man, and to sacrifice that which cometh from God only; to live and die lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God? You are satisfied with this course now; but, as rational beings, you are bound to consider also the future; and dare you set yourself to inquire where this course will end? Especially, dare you ask this question in consideration of the fact that you are holding fast to the world, when heaven and earth are engaged to detach you from it; when Justice is calling to you from the mount of fire, and Mercy is calling to you from the mount of blood, and both charging you to cast away your idols? I may say with confidence in respect to all of you, even the youngest, that, a century hence, the world cannot reach out its hand to you to help you in any thing; you must have inward resources then in a renovated nature, and in the love of God filling and satisfying your soul, or you will be miserable. Wherefore, I pray you, act the wiser part. Instead of limiting your views to this fleeting hour of existence, take in the future, the whole future, the eternal future. There are a thousand voices charging you to forsake your idols, and to make Jehovah your portion; and if ye heed them not, marvel not if even those who sinned and fell at the foot of Horeb should meet you at last with fiend-like exultation, that you have found a lower place in the abyss of despair than they.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 6, Vol. XXVI.] JUNE, 1852. [Whole No. 306.

SERMON DLXXIII.*

BY REV. ENOCH POND, D.D.,

PROFESSOR IN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, BANGOR, ME.

THE RELIGION OF PANTHEISM.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."—Colossians ii. 8.

This exhortation of the apostle has lost nothing of its pertinence or importance through the lapse of time. The world has been cursed these thousands of years with systems of vain and vaunting philosophy, which have set their claims above the Bible, and have perverted and corrupted the true religion. There has not been a year since the death of Paul, when, could he have returned to the earth and spoken again to his brethren in the flesh, he might not have appropriately addressed them in the language of the text: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

I deeply feel that this warning, this exhortation, is peculiarly appropriate at the present day; and it is because I thus feel, that I have made it the foundation of my present discourse. The two grand enemies of the Church at this day, as it seems to me, are Popery on the one hand, and a proud, infidel, pantheistic philosophy on the other. From which of the two she has most to fear, I shall not undertake to decide. Of our danger from the former we have been the most frequently and solemnly warned, and seem to be the most fully aware. I feel called upon, there-

* Preached at the installation of the Rev. Preston Pond over the Edwards church and society in Boston, February 24th, 1852.

fore, to sound a note of alarm (feeble though it may be) with respect to the latter.

The subject of this discourse is, *the Religion of Pantheism;* its nature, its characteristics, its defects, and the marks by which it is to be distinguished from the religion of the gospel.

Pantheism is that form of religion which makes every thing God, and God every thing. It teaches that there is but one *substance* or *essence* in the universe, and that all existing beings and things are but parts, exhibitions, developments of that.

Pantheists, however, have not been agreed as to the nature of this universal substance, and the manner in which it moves, or is moved. Some have held all things to be *material;* and their system has been one of gross naturalism. There is no such thing as spirit, distinct from matter, in the universe. Others have regarded all things as *spiritual*, or more properly *ideal*, and their system is one of pure idealism. What we call matter has no existence out of ourselves. We have an *idea* of it, and that is all.

With some, the grand moving principle is *immanent* in nature, where it is developing its forces and working out results, according to necessary and eternal laws. With others, the motive power is rather *emanative.* The great source of being is constantly sending forth its streams to wander in fixed courses for a time, and then flow back to the ocean from which they came. We are ourselves, just now, little bubbles upon the surface; but the bubble will soon burst, and we shall be as though we had not been.

The Pantheism of some is dry, speculative, and scarcely intelligible; like that of the transcendentalists of Germany. The Pantheism of others is of a more religious cast; like that of the Brahmins of India, the Sufies of Persia, and the mystics of the middle ages.

It is with Pantheism in its religious aspect that we are now more particularly concerned; and if any doubt whether, in this view, the subject is worthy our consideration, let me conciliate their attention by the mention of two or three facts.

1. Pantheism is, probably, the *oldest* form of religious error now existing on the earth. No sooner did the knowledge of the true God begin to pass away from the minds of men, than we find them deifying *nature*, or (which is the same) deifying those processes and laws, in accordance with which existing changes were seen to take place. This was Pantheism. So it was in Egypt, that old cradle of superstition and speculation, from which the treasures of "science falsely so called" were imported into the neighboring countries. So it was in Phœnicia, in Chaldæa, in Persia, in Greece, in later times among the Jews, and in the oriental nations generally.

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 6, Vol. XXVI] JUNE, 1852. [Whole No. 306.

SERMON DLXXIII.*

BY REV. ENOCH POND, D.D.,

PROFESSOR IN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, BANGOR, ME.

THE RELIGION OF PANTHEISM.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."—Colossians ii. 8.

This exhortation of the apostle has lost nothing of its pertinence or importance through the lapse of time. The world has been cursed these thousands of years with systems of vain and vaunting philosophy, which have set their claims above the Bible, and have perverted and corrupted the true religion. There has not been a year since the death of Paul, when, could he have returned to the earth and spoken again to his brethren in the flesh, he might not have appropriately addressed them in the language of the text: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

I deeply feel that this warning, this exhortation, is peculiarly appropriate at the present day; and it is because I thus feel, that I have made it the foundation of my present discourse. The two grand enemies of the Church at this day, as it seems to me, are Popery on the one hand, and a proud, infidel, pantheistic philosophy on the other. From which of the two she has most to fear, I shall not undertake to decide. Of our danger from the former we have been the most frequently and solemnly warned, and seem to be the most fully aware. I feel called upon, there-

* Preached at the installation of the Rev. Preston Pond over the Edwards church and society in Boston, February 24th, 1852.

is the religion, not only of nature, but of *art;* the religion of poetry, of music, of painting, of statuary, and even of architecture. A gothic church, for example, with its towers, and arches, and painted windows, and sombre light, is a remarkably religious object. Nor does he discard what is commonly called revealed religion. He speaks kindly and patronizingly of the Bible, professes to honor it, and talks of the inspiration of those who wrote it. The Christ of our religion, he says, was a wonderful personage; the highest of all the developments of humanity, or, if you choose, a manifestation of the Divinity. Christianity, too, is a "great idea," which came forth to light in the fulness of time, and as yet has never been superseded.

The Pantheist is often not only a member of the Christian Church, but a minister in it, and a teacher of its future ministers. Nor does his course of life necessarily belie his profession. His mind may be serious and contemplative, his aspect grave, his disposition amiable, and his morals not only pure, but severe. He denies himself, it may be, many indulgences, loves every body, has little contact with the world, and professes and seems to live above it.

And now the question arises: Is not this a holy character? Is he not a truly religious man? What fault is to be found with a religion such as this? And how is it to be distinguished, if distinguished at all, from the religion of the gospel?

These, my brethren, are fair questions; and I propose to give them, if you will bear with me, a fair and full answer.

I. First, then, this pantheistic religion differs from the religion of the gospel, in that it has *no God*. After what has been said, this may seem to you a startling declaration; but I make it, I assure you, in all seriousness: the religion of the Pantheist has *no God*. He may talk as much as he pleases about God, and profess to admire him in his works: his system embraces, and he himself believes in, no God at all.

What is God? This term, as used by all Theists, denotes a *real Being*, a spirit, a person, possessing personal attributes, and exercising personal prerogatives and powers. He made the world, and governs it. He created us, and has a right to dispose of us according to his pleasure. Does the Pantheist believe in such a God as this? Not at all. Does he believe in *any literal, personal Deity?* No more than the Atheist. What then does he mean by the term God, which is so often on his lips? He means almost any thing you please—except the God of nature and the Bible. Some make God an inward force, a moving power, an unfolding process, a universal law. Some call him an idea, a principle, a feeling. Some make him every thing, and some nothing. At any rate, he is but a *personification*, and not a person; a figure of speech, and not a reality.

Among heathen Pantheists, none have refined upon this subject more exquisitely than the Boodhs of China; and they have come deliberately to the conclusion that *God is Nothing*. Among Christian Pantheists, none have pursued their investigations farther, or more intently, than Hegel, the last and greatest of the leading transcendentalists of Germany; and he, too, has come to the same conclusion: *God is Nothing*. Here then we have it from both Pagan and Christian, and from either side of the globe: *God is Nothing*. And, on the principles which these men adopt, they reason correctly. There is no resisting their conclusion. They say, with the Atheist, *No God*.

On this point, I agree entirely with the late Professor Ware, Jr., of Cambridge. "Pantheism," he says, "or a denial of the strict personality of God, is a virtual *denial of God*. Indeed, this is the only sense in which it seems possible to make that denial. No one thinks of denying the existence of *principles and laws*; and if these constitute the Deity, he has not been denied, and cannot be. The only denial possible is by the exclusion of a personal existence. There can be no Atheism but this, and this is Atheism. There is a personal God, or there is none."*

Here, then, we have a sounding, vaunting religion, with high pretensions to spirituality and piety, without a God. The system includes none but a figurative Deity, which is, in reality, none at all. To offer us a religion without the Trinity, without an atonement, without the special work of the Holy Spirit, and justification by faith in Christ—this were bad enough. But to present us with a philosophical theory which excludes the very existence of the Supreme Being, and call that a religion—this is the strangest and the worst of all! This is to insult both the understanding and the heart!

And as Pantheism excludes a literal, personal God, so it excludes all those doctrines, and all those spiritual duties and affections, which hang upon the Divine existence. If there is no God, what need have we to fear him, or love him; or how are such affections possible? We may fear a power, we may admire a process; but this is not fearing or loving God.

Again: If there is no God, then there is no such thing as the *providence of God*. And if there is no Divine Providence, there is no room for *gratitude*, *submission*, or *trust*. You rise in the morning, and thank God for your preservation through the night. When you retire at night, you thank him for the favors and mercise of the day. But if you were philosophically enlightened, you would know that all this is a superfluous and superstitious labor. To be sure, the processes of nature have been moving kindly on. The conditions of your being, and of your comforta-

* Sermon on the Personality of God, p. 13.

ble being, have not been forfeited. But there has been no proper *Divine Providence* over you. It is not *God* who has blessed you; and why should you be at the trouble to thank him?

Under trials and afflictions, it is the privilege of the Christian to *submit* to God. He says: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" But this precious consolation Pantheism, like Atheism, takes quite away. It leaves no ground for it at all. 'The powers of nature have, indeed, been working against me; at least, I am cursed with some painful ideas. I have unpleasant dreams. But then there is no hand of God in this. There is no God to have a hand in it. As my sufferings are unavoidable, I may as well submit as complain. What we cannot help, we should consent to bear, and to bear with a manly fortitude.' This is all the submission which Pantheism knows.

And these pantheistic theories furnish no more ground of *trust* with regard to the future, than they do of submission or gratitude. The powers of nature will continue to work, and its processes to run on; but where will they run, and what will be the issue? Who can tell? We are out at sea, and appearances now may be fair and calm; but fierce storms will arise, the winds will blow, and the billows roll; and where they will roll us, there is no being in the universe that knows. Leave to the Christian his God, a God of infinite wisdom, power, and love, in whose hands are all agencies and influences, and without whom not a sparrow falls; and he has no fears. He can be resigned and happy under any circumstances. "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." But take away the providence of God, and all ground of trust is gone. We are the sport now of conflicting causes and influences, and what is to become of us, or what is to be the issue of things in the general, no tongue can tell.

The Pantheist may talk of his *dependence* upon God; but his dependence, like his trust, is all a sham. Dependent upon what? On influences which are above him; on a law, a power, which he cannot resist. Dependent on the blind forces and processes of nature, which no being originated, which none controls, and the issues of which none can understand. And is this to be called dependence upon God? Shame on those who can consent to use terms in such a way! And pity on those who can be deluded by them!

But the Pantheist mourns his absence from God, and sighs and longs for a more perfect union. And now what is the meaning of all this? Does he deplore, with the Christian, his *spiritual* departures from God, and seek and strive for a greater nearness in this sense? Not at all. This is no part of what he means. But he is an *individual* now. He is in a state of development,

of emanation, and consequently of comparative separation. He is not now, as he once was, in the bosom of the ocean, but is a bubble on the surface; and he longs to be resolved back again—to be entirely absorbed. He longs for the day when the bubble shall burst, and he shall return into the great universe of being.*

The spirit of all true religion is a spirit of *prayer*. The Christian cannot live without prayer. It is natural to him as his breath, and necessary as his daily food. But Pantheism removes all ground of prayer, and renders it a useless, meaningless service. Pray to whom, if there is no personal, prayer-hearing God? Pray to inward forces, processes, and laws? Pray to an idea, a principle, a feeling, a personification, a figure of speech? What sense or propriety is there in prayer such as this? No; on the pantheistic theory, there is no reason or use in prayer. We are all in the world's great machine together, and if we get into trouble there, there is no help for us. It is vain to cry for relief or mercy. Blind forces cannot hear us. Nor will it help the matter at all to personify these forces, and call them God. They are still deaf and dumb and blind; a God who cannot hear, or see, or save.

I have now shown that Pantheism is a religion without a God; and that in excluding God, it necessarily excludes all those doctrines, spiritual duties and affections, which stand connected with the Divine existence.

II. I proceed to say, secondly, that Pantheism is a religion *without a Bible*. By the Bible, I understand a supernatural revelation, authenticated by miracles and other infallible proofs, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and comprised in our canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. Such is the Bible, according to the understanding of evangelical Christians—the only Bible that is worth contending for; and such a Bible, Pantheism entirely excludes. How can it be otherwise? The Bible, we say, is a revelation from God; but Pantheism says there is no literal, personal God to make such a revelation. The Bible, we say, is authenticated by miracles; but Pantheism says there never was a proper miracle, and never can be. The Bible, we say, is a supernatural gift; but Pantheism denies that there is any thing

* If any doubt as to the nature of these pantheistic longings after a more perfect union with God, let him read the rhapsodies of the Sufies, a class of Persian Pantheists, on the subject. Some have mistaken their wild songs as the breathing forth of holy desires. This, if I mistake not, was the case with Prof. Tholuck. But Henry Martyn, who resided long at Shiraz, and was brought into continual contact with the Sufies, knew them better. He describes them as "a body of mystic latitudinarians, distinguished chiefly for gross sensuality and self-indulgence, incredible vanity, and universal skepticism." "Their professed religion," he says, "is no religion at all. It removes all the foundations, and unsettles all religious belief." One of them said to Mr. Martyn, that "himself, and every created thing, was God." Another said: "There is no distinction between the Creator and the creature, and no real difference between good and evil."

supernatural—anything above, or aside from, natural processes and laws.

But it will be asked: Do not our philosophical *savans* put abundant honor upon some of the sacred writers, speaking of them as divinely illuminated, rapt, inspired? Indeed, they do; and they put equal honor upon Homer, and Hesiod, and Socrates, and Plato, and Zoroaster, and all the great poets and philosophers of antiquity. These were all inspired, as really, and perhaps as fully, as Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or any of the Hebrew prophets. Indeed, these ladies and gentlemen are themselves inspired, as every wise and gifted person must be.

There are two ways in which to be rid of the proper inspiration of the Scriptures. The one is, to deny it in terms; and this is by far the more honorable way. The other is, to make inspiration a common, an almost universal gift: so that while it is accorded in terms to the sacred writers, or to some of them, they still have no pre-eminence or authority above a thousand others. If the inspiration of Moses and the prophets did not exceed that of [illegible] and modern Pantheists, who would think of being bound by their decisions, or giving any diligent heed to their words?*

[illegible] Pantheism excludes, of course, all the [illegible] of the Bible.

[illegible] *freedom*, the *accountableness* of man. The [illegible] of nature move resistlessly on. One endless [illegible] and effects, of antecedents and consequents—and [illegible] by a personal God, but by an invincible neces- [illegible] Hence, there is no room left for moral [illegible] ever. Nor is this conclusion disclaimed by [illegible] "Every thing," says Spinoza, "is deter- [illegible] of nature, nor could aught be produced [illegible]" "All which has been, which is, and shall [illegible]" is founded on the eternal necessity of things." [illegible] the existence and even the possibility of *sin*. [illegible] nature which lives and acts in all creatures [illegible] all their action is Divine action. All created [illegible] feel, and act as God acts in them, and, of [illegible] as he would have them. Hence, there can be [illegible] sinful, in the character or conduct of any [illegible]" Nor do modern Pantheists shrink at all from [illegible] thus imputed to them. "Men have invented [illegible] Spinoza, "to distinguish that as good which tends [illegible] and that as evil which is the contrary." But there [illegible] difference in the reality of things. Our American [illegible] with the same doctrine, as appears in the following

* See Murdock's Sketches, p. 187.

passages from "The Dial:" "Holding, as Pantheists do, but one essence of things, which essence is God, they must deny the existence of essential evil. All evil is negative; it is imperfection, non-growth. It is not essential, but modal. Sin is not a wilful transgression of a righteous law, but it is the difficulty, the obstruction, which the infinite meets in entering into the finite." This then is sin—"*the obstruction which the infinite meets in entering into the finite.*" I hope the definition may be remembered. Another writer in "The Dial" says: "Pantheism annihilates man, so far as moral obligation is concerned. Man's desires, thoughts, and volitions are manifestations of God; and if so, *they must be good*, and are bad only in appearance, if at all."*

It follows from what has been said, that Pantheists must deny all proper *punishment* for sin. If there is no sin, there surely ought to be no punishment. The results of our actions, indeed, are not all alike. Some are painful; others are agreeable. But aside from natural, necessary results, there is no such thing as reward or punishment. There is no personal Sovereign in the universe to bestow the one or inflict the other.

And if sin incurs no penalty, then there can be no such thing as *forgiveness*, or the remission of a penalty. When persons cease from such actions as give them pain, the pain, of course, ceases; and this is all the forgiveness of which Pantheism has any knowledge.

I have said that Pantheists in Christian lands are not backward to speak of Christ. What then do they think of him? And where do they place him? Just where it best suits their own convenience. The Christ of Strauss is but an *ideal* personage—the hero of the Christian myths. The Christ of Parker is a man like ourselves; an extraordinary man; a gifted man; the greatest perhaps that has yet appeared, though not so great as may be anticipated in future years. The Christ of many of the German Pantheists is divine. These men have no scruple in ascribing Divinity to our Saviour. Every creature is divine. Christ was truly "God, manifest in the flesh." And so was Hegel; so is Feuerbach and Strauss; so is every other creature which has flesh and blood.

It may interest you to know what views our American Pantheists take of the *atonement*. The conductors of the Dial speak of it on this wise: "Pantheists hold to the atonement, or the *at-one-ment* between the soul and God. This is strictly a unity or oneness of *essence*, brought about by the incarnation of the Spirit of God within us"—since each one of us is "God manifest in the flesh." As we grow wise, just, and pure, we grow to be one with God in *mode*, as we always were in *essence*. This "atonement"—in

* Dial, vol. i, pp. 106, 424.

mode—" is effected by Christ, only as he taught the manner in which it is to be accomplished more fully than any other, and gave a better illustration of it in his own person."

As to the doctrine of *immortality*, which makes a part of almost all religions, Pantheists in one sense admit it, and in another sense deny it. The soul is immortal as to its *substance* or *essence*. Partaking of the very nature of God, of course, it cannot be annihilated. But as to its *separate, conscious existence*, the soul is not immortal. It will cease to exist. It will, at length, be swallowed up in the great ocean of being from which it came. Peradventure it may come forth again, in some other connection or form, but never as constituting the same individual person which now exists. This is what John Toland meant, in that heathenish epitaph which he wrote for himself: " My substance shall come forth again, at some period of eternity, but never again shall it be Toland."

As to the precise period of the soul's absorption, Pantheists are not agreed among themselves. Some think it may occur in the present life. Thus the Fakirs of India not unfrequently come into a state before they die, in which they say: "*I* am the unchangeable; *I* am the ever-living; *I* am the inconceivable, the simple life, the displayer of all things." Some hold, with Toland, that the absorption takes place at death ; while others believe that this great event may be long delayed, especially in the case of those who are not prepared for it when they leave the world. They may be destined to pass into other bodies, and to undergo long probations and purgations, before they are sufficiently purified to be swallowed up of life.

I have said that the morality which Pantheism inculcates is often severe; as in the case of the ancient mystics and ascetics. But in other cases, and I fear in most cases in modern times, it is just the opposite of this. Having no fear of God before their eyes, and no dread of a future personal retribution, persons throw off all restraint, give a loose rein to appetite and lust, and practise every form of wickedness with greediness.

You will now be able to judge, my hearers, of the nature of pantheistic piety, or the religion of Pantheism. You will be able to see wherein it differs from the religion of the gospel; or rather, that it differs *every where*, in every thing except sounds and names. If the Bible is true, this religion is a shadow, and a great deal worse than a shadow; and if this be true, the Bible is a useless and pernicious fiction. Certain it is, that the two can never stand together. They have nothing in common, whether in doctrine or spirit; whether in object of worship, or motives to action, or rules of life.

And now, if the question be raised: How is it that this miser-

able delusion has obtained so wide a currency in the world? how is it that it prevails, not only among Jews, Mohammedans, and Heathens, but in enlightened Christian lands, so that it may be said (I fear with truth) that "already all, or nearly all educated men, from end to end of continental Europe," are infected by it; so that, next to Popery, it may be regarded as the most appalling enemy of a pure Christianity? the answers to these inquiries may be given in few words. With all its absurdities this religion has much to recommend it to nearly all classes of carnal, unrenewed men. It has a bait, a sop, a lure for each, according as his taste and inclination may be.

"For the contemplative and devout, it has its mysticism, its vagueness, its pretended spirituality, and deadness to the world. For the poetical and imaginative, it has many enchantments; as it gives consciousness and life to every object, and makes all things but expressions of the Infinite One. For the vain and the proud, no Circe ever mingled so intoxicating a cup. 'Ye *shall be* as gods,' said the arch-tempter to our first parents, six thousand years ago. 'Ye *are* gods,' he now whispers into willing ears. For the shallow pretender to wisdom, this philosophy has peculiar charms. He has only to learn the sounding phraseology of the sect; to talk of the *me* and the *not me*, of the heights of the absolute, and the profundities of the human consciousness; and he is already a great character; he is beyond the depths of ordinary men." For the professed liberalist, the man of easy conscience, who thinks one religion just as good as another, Pantheism is the most convenient thing in the world; for it can assume any shape, appear in any form, adopt any creed, or all creeds, or no creed at all, as circumstances seem to require. "For the pleasure-loving and the sensual, this doctrine is a perfect heaven. It legitimates and dignifies all their enjoyments; it makes a religion of self-indulgence; it excites no fears, imposes no restraints, but permits every one to consult his own comforts, as best he may."

That a system so manifold as this, which has a chamber of imagery for every vain imagination, should have advocates and friends, is certainly no matter of surprise. We wonder not at all that it has spread widely in this wicked world; we wonder not that it begins to raise its demoniac front, and boast of numbers, and threaten to swallow up every thing which stands in its way.

And yet, with all its fascinations, what has it, in reality, to recommend it? No God, no Bible, no Saviour, no ground of consolation under present trials, no opening prospects of future glory; *what has it*, I ask again, *to recommend it?* And why should

any forsake the plain path of the gospel to chase its shadows, and sport themselves with its deceivings?

There is nothing more affecting in all history than the dying confession of John Theophilus Fichte, one of the great preachers and apostles of German Pantheism. "I know absolutely nothing," says he, "of any existence, not even my own. Images there are, and they constitute all that apparently exists. I am myself one of these images; nay, not so much, but only a confused image of an image. All reality is converted into a marvellous dream, without a life to dream of, or a mind to dream; into a dream, itself made up only of a dream. Perception is a dream; and thought, the source of all the existence, the reality, which I imagine to myself, is but the dream of that dream."

And is this the end of pantheistic piety? Is this the dying confession of a man who had studied it, professed it, and taught it, with high honor and success, through a long course of years? Let me, then, "die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Let me rather accept and pursue the religion of Paul, that I may be able to say with him, in my last hour: "I *know* in whom I have believed, and am sure that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day."

That the Church of Christ is now seriously threatened from the inroads of that philosophy which I have attempted to describe, there can be no doubt. But that it will be overcome in the conflict, no one who has faith in the great Captain of our salvation can for a moment believe.

That we may be delivered in this day of our trial, and not only delivered, but come off victorious, only two things seem to me to be necessary. The first is, that we *know our enemy;* know his nature, his artifices, his resources, his strength, the forms of deception which he assumes, and the ways in which he leads captive to destroy.

And knowing with whom we have to contend, we are, in the second place, to go forth and meet him, not with arms of our own preparing, but in a skilful use of the old tried weapons of the gospel, and in a prayerful reliance on those aids and influences which are proffered us from heaven. It is true that, in ourselves, we have no strength. What are we, that we should engage the embattled hosts which the Prince of Darkness is now arraying against us? "In our own sight we are but as grasshoppers, and so we are in their sight." Yet it is our privilege to say, with our brothers of olden time: "We can do all things, through Christ strengthening us." "We are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us and died for us." Relying prayerfully on his promised aid, and using faithfully the weapons which he hath given us, no power on earth can overcome us, or stand against

us. One shall be able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight, until our enemies are all scattered, and the victory is won.

Courage then, my brethren, in the work of the Lord; courage to toil on, whether in early morn, or sunny noon, or evening shade, till the night of death comes over us, and we can no longer work. It is our privilege to follow a Master who never forgets or forsakes his faithful servants. We labor in a cause where not a stone is laid, or a stroke struck, or a prayer is offered up in vain. If we are faithful, we may behold the fruits of our labor even *here*. And this will be pleasant, amidst the turmoil and dust of the conflict, to *see* that our work is not in vain in the Lord. But whether this privilege is permitted us or not, we know that no work of faith, or labor of love, can be lost. Such works are sure to follow us to heaven; for it is a part of the blessing of the holy dead, not only that they shall rest from their labors, but that *their works shall follow them*. May this blessing, dear brethren, be *ours*, individually and collectively ours. Amen.

SERMON DLXXIV.

BY REV. A. C. PIERCE,

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

THE GREAT LESSON OF MAN'S EARTHLY STATE.

"Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. iii. 1, 2.

Admitting the truth that it is the same God who has ordered the circumstances of man's nature and condition in this earthly state of being, and inspired the pages of Revelation, it were natural to suppose that there would be religious correspondences between them; that the same teachings which the "lively oracles" urge upon our attention, would also, in unseen, yet to us intelligible characters, be written within and around us.

And so it is. Religion is not alone of Revelation, it is also of Nature. Deep in the desires, the impulses, the feelings which make up our inward experience, and are the circumstances which

any forsake the plain path of the gospel to chase its shadows, and sport themselves with its deceivings?

There is nothing more affecting in all history than the dying confession of John Theophilus Fichte, one of the great preachers and apostles of German Pantheism. "I know absolutely nothing," says he, "of any existence, not even my own. Images there are, and they constitute all that apparently exists. I am myself one of these images; nay, not so much, but only a confused image of an image. All reality is converted into a marvellous dream, without a life to dream of, or a mind to dream; into a dream, itself made up only of a dream. Perception is a dream; and thought, the source of all the existence, the reality, which I imagine to myself, is but the dream of that dream."

And is this the end of pantheistic piety? Is this the dying confession of a man who had studied it, professed it, and taught it, with high honor and success, through a long course of years? Let me, then, "die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Let me rather accept and pursue the religion of Paul, that I may be able to say with him, in my last hour: "I *know* in whom I have believed, and am sure that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day."

That the Church of Christ is now seriously threatened from the inroads of that philosophy which I have attempted to describe, there can be no doubt. But that it will be overcome in the conflict, no one who has faith in the great Captain of our salvation can for a moment believe.

That we may be delivered in this day of our trial, and not only delivered, but come off victorious, only two things seem to me to be necessary. The first is, that we *know our enemy;* know his nature, his artifices, his resources, his strength, the forms of deception which he assumes, and the ways in which he leads captive to destroy.

And knowing with whom we have to contend, we are, in the second place, to go forth and meet him, not with arms of our own preparing, but in a skilful use of the old tried weapons of the gospel, and in a prayerful reliance on those aids and influences which are proffered us from heaven. It is true that, in ourselves, we have no strength. What are we, that we should engage the embattled hosts which the Prince of Darkness is now arraying against us? "In our own sight we are but as grasshoppers, and so we are in their sight." Yet it is our privilege to say, with our brothers of olden time: "We can do all things, through Christ strengthening us." "We are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us and died for us." Relying prayerfully on his promised aid, and using faithfully the weapons which he hath given us, no power on earth can overcome us, or stand against

us. One shall be able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight, until our enemies are all scattered, and the victory is won.

Courage then, my brethren, in the work of the Lord; courage to toil on, whether in early morn, or sunny noon, or evening shade, till the night of death comes over us, and we can no longer work. It is our privilege to follow a Master who never forgets or forsakes his faithful servants. We labor in a cause where not a stone is laid, or a stroke struck, or a prayer is offered up in vain. If we are faithful, we may behold the fruits of our labor even *here*. And this will be pleasant, amidst the turmoil and dust of the conflict, to *see* that our work is not in vain in the Lord. But whether this privilege is permitted us or not, we know that no work of faith, or labor of love, can be lost. Such works are sure to follow us to heaven; for it is a part of the blessing of the holy dead, not only that they shall rest from their labors, but that *their works shall follow them*. May this blessing, dear brethren, be *ours*, individually and collectively ours. Amen.

SERMON DLXXIV.

BY REV. A. C. PIERCE,

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

THE GREAT LESSON OF MAN'S EARTHLY STATE.

"Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. iii. 1,'2.

Admitting the truth that it is the same God who has ordered the circumstances of man's nature and condition in this earthly state of being, and inspired the pages of Revelation, it were natural to suppose that there would be religious correspondences between them; that the same teachings which the "lively oracles" urge upon our attention, would also, in unseen, yet to us intelligible characters, be written within and around us.

And so it is. Religion is not alone of Revelation, it is also of Nature. Deep in the desires, the impulses, the feelings which make up our inward experience, and are the circumstances which

any forsake the plain path of the gospel to chase its shadows, and sport themselves with its deceivings?

There is nothing more affecting in all history than the dying confession of John Theophilus Fichte, one of the great preachers and apostles of German Pantheism. "I know absolutely nothing," says he, "of any existence, not even my own. Images there are, and they constitute all that apparently exists. I am myself one of these images; nay, not so much, but only a confused image of an image. All reality is converted into a marvellous dream, without a life to dream of, or a mind to dream; into a dream, itself made up only of a dream. Perception is a dream; and thought, the source of all the existence, the reality, which I imagine to myself, is but the dream of that dream."

And is this the end of pantheistic piety? Is this the dying confession of a man who had studied it, professed it, and taught it, with high honor and success, through a long course of years? Let me, then, "die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Let me rather accept and pursue the religion of Paul, that I may be able to say with him, in my last hour: "I *know* in whom I have believed, and am sure that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day."

That the Church of Christ is now seriously threatened from the inroads of that philosophy which I have attempted to describe, there can be no doubt. But that it will be overcome in the conflict, no one who has faith in the great Captain of our salvation can for a moment believe.

That we may be delivered in this day of our trial, and not only delivered, but come off victorious, only two things seem to me to be necessary. The first is, that we *know our enemy;* know his nature, his artifices, his resources, his strength, the forms of deception which he assumes, and the ways in which he leads captive to destroy.

And knowing with whom we have to contend, we are, in the second place, to go forth and meet him, not with arms of our own preparing, but in a skilful use of the old tried weapons of the gospel, and in a prayerful reliance on those aids and influences which are proffered us from heaven. It is true that, in ourselves, we have no strength. What are we, that we should engage the embattled hosts which the Prince of Darkness is now arraying against us? "In our own sight we are but as grasshoppers, and so we are in their sight." Yet it is our privilege to say, with our brothers of olden time: "We can do all things, through Christ strengthening us." "We are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us and died for us." Relying prayerfully on his promised aid, and using faithfully the weapons which he hath given us, no power on earth can overcome us, or stand against

us. One shall be able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight, until our enemies are all scattered, and the victory is won.

Courage then, my brethren, in the work of the Lord; courage to toil on, whether in early morn, or sunny noon, or evening shade, till the night of death comes over us, and we can no longer work. It is our privilege to follow a Master who never forgets or forsakes his faithful servants. We labor in a cause where not a stone is laid, or a stroke struck, or a prayer is offered up in vain. If we are faithful, we may behold the fruits of our labor even *here*. And this will be pleasant, amidst the turmoil and dust of the conflict, to *see* that our work is not in vain in the Lord. But whether this privilege is permitted us or not, we know that no work of faith, or labor of love, can be lost. Such works are sure to follow us to heaven; for it is a part of the blessing of the holy dead, not only that they shall rest from their labors, but that *their works shall follow them*. May this blessing, dear brethren, be *ours*, individually and collectively ours. Amen.

SERMON DLXXIV.

BY REV. A. C. PIERCE,

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

THE GREAT LESSON OF MAN'S EARTHLY STATE.

"Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." COL. iii. 1, 2.

ADMITTING the truth that it is the same God who has ordered the circumstances of man's nature and condition in this earthly state of being, and inspired the pages of Revelation, it were natural to suppose that there would be religious correspondences between them; that the same teachings which the "lively oracles" urge upon our attention, would also, in unseen, yet to us intelligible characters, be written within and around us.

And so it is. Religion is not alone of Revelation, it is also of Nature. Deep in the desires, the impulses, the feelings which make up our inward experience, and are the circumstances which

any forsake the plain path of the gospel to chase its shadows, and sport themselves with its deceivings?

There is nothing more affecting in all history than the dying confession of John Theophilus Fichte, one of the great preachers and apostles of German Pantheism. "I know absolutely nothing," says he, "of any existence, not even my own. Images there are, and they constitute all that apparently exists. I am myself one of these images; nay, not so much, but only a confused image of an image. All reality is converted into a marvellous dream, without a life to dream of, or a mind to dream; into a dream, itself made up only of a dream. Perception is a dream; and thought, the source of all the existence, the reality, which I imagine to myself, is but the dream of that dream."

And is this the end of pantheistic piety? Is this the dying confession of a man who had studied it, professed it, and taught it, with high honor and success, through a long course of years? Let me, then, "die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Let me rather accept and pursue the religion of Paul, that I may be able to say with him, in my last hour: "I *know* in whom I have believed, and am sure that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day."

That the Church of Christ is now seriously threatened from the inroads of that philosophy which I have attempted to describe, there can be no doubt. But that it will be overcome in the conflict, no one who has faith in the great Captain of our salvation can for a moment believe.

That we may be delivered in this day of our trial, and not only delivered, but come off victorious, only two things seem to me to be necessary. The first is, that we *know our enemy;* know his nature, his artifices, his resources, his strength, the forms of deception which he assumes, and the ways in which he leads captive to destroy.

And knowing with whom we have to contend, we are, in the second place, to go forth and meet him, not with arms of our own preparing, but in a skilful use of the old tried weapons of the gospel, and in a prayerful reliance on those aids and influences which are proffered us from heaven. It is true that, in ourselves, we have no strength. What are we, that we should engage the embattled hosts which the Prince of Darkness is now arraying against us? "In our own sight we are but as grasshoppers, and so we are in their sight." Yet it is our privilege to say, with our brothers of olden time: "We can do all things, through Christ strengthening us." "We are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us and died for us." Relying prayerfully on his promised aid, and using faithfully the weapons which he hath given us, no power on earth can overcome us, or stand against

us. One shall be able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight, until our enemies are all scattered, and the victory is won.

Courage then, my brethren, in the work of the Lord; courage to toil on, whether in early morn, or sunny noon, or evening shade, till the night of death comes over us, and we can no longer work. It is our privilege to follow a Master who never forgets or forsakes his faithful servants. We labor in a cause where not a stone is laid, or a stroke struck, or a prayer is offered up in vain. If we are faithful, we may behold the fruits of our labor even *here*. And this will be pleasant, amidst the turmoil and dust of the conflict, to *see* that our work is not in vain in the Lord. But whether this privilege is permitted us or not, we know that no work of faith, or labor of love, can be lost. Such works are sure to follow us to heaven; for it is a part of the blessing of the holy dead, not only that they shall rest from their labors, but that *their works shall follow them*. May this blessing, dear brethren, be *ours*, individually and collectively ours. Amen.

SERMON DLXXIV.

BY REV. A. C. PIERCE,

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

THE GREAT LESSON OF MAN'S EARTHLY STATE.

"Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. iii. 1,'2.

Admitting the truth that it is the same God who has ordered the circumstances of man's nature and condition in this earthly state of being, and inspired the pages of Revelation, it were natural to suppose that there would be religious correspondences between them; that the same teachings which the "lively oracles" urge upon our attention, would also, in unseen, yet to us intelligible characters, be written within and around us.

And so it is. Religion is not alone of Revelation, it is also of Nature. Deep in the desires, the impulses, the feelings which make up our inward experience, and are the circumstances which

constitute or contribute to our outward life, its lessons are scarcely less impressively taught than by the hand of the sacred penman, guided by the superintendence of the Holy Ghost; and while we commit ourselves to the Bible as an all-sufficient "Rule of Faith and Practice," we should also give a language to the never-satisfied cravings, to the restless impulses which intimate our immortality. We should heed the admonitions of duty which are addressed to us in myriad voices by every thing around us in nature, and which transpires in our ever-changing history.

So full and clear, indeed, are these lessons concerning our duty and our destiny, that an apostle declared those who had not received the written oracles to be "without excuse," since, "having not the law," they "are a law unto themselves."

Now the great practical truth of Revelation, a truth to which every other is in some way related, is that this life is to man, the chief actor in its concerns, a state probationary to another, a period of preparation for an existence higher, holier, and unending; that the great *business* of every mortal here on earth, so far as his own interests are concerned, is to get ready for entrance upon the heavenly state, when the probationary season is over.

Upon almost every page of the Bible the duty of the text is enjoined, "Seek those things which are above;" and so too there are circumstances of our earthly condition, elements in the natures we here possess, which urge the same practical lesson recognizing the existence of another state, bidding us make its attainment our commanding business on this side the grave.

The object of this discourse shall be to specify some of these elements, and to point out some of these circumstances, in the hope that they may have some influence upon those before me, in persuading to the duty and the privilege of *seeking after heaven.*

I. The first of these elements which I shall specify, is a certain restless dissatisfaction with every thing earthly, an insatiate ambition for something higher and holier than this world affords, which is a part of universal experience.

Who, of all the most highly favored in earthly possessions, honors, and pleasures, has ever been entirely contented and happy? Who has not experienced longings after something not yet realized, longings which are not and never can be satisfied with the passing objects of time and sense? Ask the man of affluence if he is at rest; and in an honest moment he will tell you that he derives not all the happiness from his treasures which he had anticipated. True, his wealth brings him animal comforts, surrounds him with conveniences, it may be splendor; it affords him the means of gratifying his taste, and of feeding a desire for knowledge; it secures to him, if rightly bestowed, the pure pleasure of charitable deeds; and in all these ways contributes to his wel-

fare: but still it reaches not the depth of his desire nor the pressing want of his soul, and in the midst of it all there comes oftimes such a sense of its unsatisfying nature, that the complaint of Judah's king is upon the lips, "All is vanity!"

Or ask the devotee of pleasure if he is fully satisfied with any and all the gratifications which he purchases so dearly; and in a thoughtful moment he will speak of the *unrest* of his spirit, the fears which disturb, and the wants which agitate his soul.

And the man whose ambition has triumphed so far as to secure to him the honors in the gift of men—is he satisfied?

You have heard of the great Alexander's tears; how, when he had conquered the world, he sat down and wept because he "knew no other world to conquer;" nay, rather should I say, because there was still a *painful* craving in his soul after the satisfaction of the highest renown had been exhausted. And Solomon too, as if sick of his regal honors, of the splendor of his state, and the gratulations of his subjects, cried, "Vanity and vexation of spirit!"

And, mingling with this dissatisfaction with the earthly, is a vague hope of something now unseen, unconjectured it may be, which will by and by meet the soul and give it repose. Who does not, in the hour of his musings, send his anxious thought down the dim future of his being on an errand of inquiry and of hope, calling up before him, as from the dust, a thousand forms of happiness, clothing them with reality—alas! how soon by experience proved "imaginings light as air"?

And why is man thus the subject of cravings insatiate, of hopes never to be answered in this world? What mean these movings of his mind; this looking for, this aspiring after something for ever future? It is not so with the flocks and herds: they feed, and are at rest. Why not man?

I answer, God has destined him to immortality, and so planted in his bosom instincts and sentiments which, if obeyed, incline him away from earth towards heaven, where his wants *can* be met, where his spirit *can* find repose; for we shall be "abundantly *satisfied*" when we wake in the likeness of God.

If earthly discontent and hope mean any thing, they mean that all which this world affords is not enough to fill up man's capacity for happiness; that time is too small for him, and that he is born for something beyond it, for immortality, and for this should live. If these restless movings of the human spirit have any significancy, they may be interpreted the voice of God speaking to each one even more forcibly than in audible accents: Ah, mortal! thy chief good is not below; heaven is before thee, the theatre of a blissful immortality; cleave not to things around thee, unsatisfying, passing, but "*seek those things which are above.*"

II. A second circumstance conveying the same lesson is, that earthly objects of affection and interest depreciate to man as he advances in life; in other words, as he progresses in years he becomes more and more incapable of deriving enjoyment from what is around him of an earthly nature.

In the years of early life, every thing which can afford satisfaction is more prolific than in subsequent time. Is it not so? How different did Nature seem to us in the sunny days of childhood than now in our more advanced period of life! We each remember the group of objects within the little circle of our observation with which we were then familiar: the tree by our father's dwelling, how tall it seemed, how broad and green its waving branches! the brook which ran murmuring by, it seemed a river then, wide and rapid; the hill, too, which skirted our horizon, rose to our fancy as a lofty mountain; the woods were far extended, and fearful was their solitude; the village spire was immensely high. In a word, every thing with which our minds were conversant was on a scale which excited our wonder and filled us with pleasing contemplation. But year by year, as from our various homes and avocations, if indeed we have been separated from these early associations, we have made pilgrimages to the places of our birth, how perceptible has been the change! Year by year the tree has lost something of its height and of its reach of branches; the brook has become more narrow and sluggish; the hill has seemed less elevated above the surrounding plain; the wood has narrowed to the little grove, and the village spire has appeared less cloud-reaching: so that we have turned away from these scenes of early life and love with something of sadness mingling in our exclamation, "Home, how art thou changed!" Yes, changed indeed, not only in these surrounding objects, but still more in the separations which Time and Death have occasioned in that once joyous, unbroken band, whose hearts beat with kindred pulsations of delight in parental and filial love. One winter's day there was a gathering there, and a mother was borne forth to the burial. One summer's eve there were low whisperings, and tears fell, and a little after we bore a sister's form to its resting-place where yonder willow bends so mournfully. And brothers, too, are away in manly occupations, one in the busy city and another far off upon the blue sea. What a decline of happiness does Time bring in its sundering of family ties!

How much of happiness was crowded into a single *pleasure day* of childhood years! Time was long, and every fountain of happiness to which we turned was abundant, and the waters were not so mingled with bitterness as in later life. Compel the young man to reënter upon the engagements in which he found sincere delight in boyhood, and is he happy? Invite the aged

to the scenes which afforded most enjoyment in his meridian years, and will he relish them?

Even the pleasures of mind, the most pure and permanent we ever receive in this world, if we except those which are connected with religious experience, begin at length to wane. One after another the powers fail. The eye grows dim, the ear heavy; the limbs refuse their support, and reason sits feebly on her throne.

So great is this depreciation, that he is indeed a *pitiable old man* to whose breast no cheerful memories come back from the past, and no cheerful anticipations of heaven; for these are almost the only enjoyments that are left to him.

And what meaneth this gradual decay of earthly satisfactions, this progressive decline of earthly pleasures?

Is it not a friendly warning of God in his constitution of things, addressed to us at each step on our journey to the grave, in language which we need not mistake, declaring to us that the things of this world are shadowy and vain, and therefore unworthy of our highest affection, our chief pursuit? Is it not a voice appealing to us in every passing pleasure, "*Seek those things which are above*"? And ah! though to the aged one failing sense and decaying joys may seem a trial heavy to be borne, yet let him not murmur against the Sovereign Disposer; for this seeming severity is rather a friendly dispensation, to make him more ready to depart when his appointed time shall come. It is God's way of breaking one after another the ties which bind him here, and raising his affections to "things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

III. But such reasoning leads us to another step. Not only do earthly things depreciate in their interest to our minds with progressing years, but they all do *positively decay*.

Transitiveness is impressed upon every thing beneath the sky. The forms of Nature wear it; every thing that is useful, every thing that is beautiful, every thing sublime, save truth itself, bears its traces. The flowers of spring, the verdure of summer, and the fruits of autumn in rapid succession pass away; the forest tree grows old and dies; even the hills, emblematic of all that is most permanent, imperceptibly but surely are crumbling down! Do we search out the proudest monuments of art, they are perished. The temples and statues, the triumphal arches and commemorative pillars which transcendent genius erected in the ancient cities, mingle in the dust with the forms of those who were their authors. Thrones perish, dynasties pass away, nations cease to be, even whole races of men become extinct, so that even now the busy workman with his spade throws up the bones of a once mighty people, now all gone, or their miserable remnants hasting toward the setting sun of existence as well as of the

western sky. Nothing, nothing upon which we can fix the heart or place our dependence, but this is its affecting memorial: "It wants continuance."

Under this universal law, what changes does a single lifetime realize! so that the aged one complains, "I am a lone monument of a generation gone; every thing else has passed away."

How much of life and excellence is trampled in the dust by the rushing years of a single century! Could one rise up from his grave of an hundred years to wander again in the places and amid the scenes familiar in his lifetime, think you that he would fondly recognize his old friendships? Nay; but every thing around would be strange, so that he would almost desire to be gathered again for very loneliness to the grave of the Past.

And is there no religious significancy to this law reaching every where, and which nothing can defy or resist? Yes: in this language of decay there is a meaning of solemn import for our thoughts to ponder. It speaks to the busy actor in life's concerns of his own perishable earthly being; it bids him learn his own sympathy with mortality; and since he is also to die, it presents that event as the one for which he should be mainly solicitous, rather than about temporal enjoyments and accumulations.

In sepulchral accents the lesson comes up from every perishing form, from every silent vale, from every mouldering pile, and from every solemn grave, "O man, thou too hast the black rod swaying over thee; the lines of decay are upon thy brow; its elements are busy in thy bones: and since thou must leave all the objects of earth so soon, aspire to those objects which are offered to thy seeking, in heaven."

IV. Again, we are impressively admonished to the same duty by the disappointments and the yearnings of our earthly affections.

Our hearts are delicately attuned with sensibilities and feelings, which *must* fix upon objects which are capable of returning to us enjoyment in their appreciation and love.

To one, the objects of Nature are the centres of affection; the woodland, the vale, the mountain, the placid stream, or the overarching sky with its countless flames, engross the heart with an almost idolatrous fondness. But these, as we have seen, are ever changing, and the conviction will force itself upon us, that by and by, when the infirmities of age come on, we can no longer appreciate Nature's beauty; that the dull eye can no more behold her splendors, or the palsied ear listen to her harmonies, or the heart thrill to her silent, yet persuasive eloquence.

Or it may be that our love centres in the truths open to our search in the various fields of knowledge. Can these ever disappoint us? Yes: for we know that the mental powers grow

feeble. Memory weakened will no more bring the pleasing themes before us, nor reason by her various processes serve our happiness.

Most of all do we love our friends. A golden chain of sympathy binds our hearts together, and offices of varied kindness have inspired mutual gratitude and reciprocal attachment. Side by side we have passed along the pathway of life, mingling in the same scenes, pursuing the same ends, our spirits refreshed by kindred joys; and when the time comes that they must pass away from us upon the returnless journey, or when the spell which has bound us is broken, our hearts follow after them with irrepressible longings; so that, except from the fears which sin has occasioned, we would even desire to go with them to the spirit-world, that thereby we might not be separated.

The truth is, we must have objects of affection, or else we are miserable. Such is the law of our natures; and it has illustration in the case of many a forsaken one whose vices have driven friends away from him, and who in old age sits upon the verge of the grave, not more the monument of sin's folly than of the desolation of an unloving heart.

And if this be so, what impression comes home to us under the conviction that all earthly objects fail? We have need to rest our hearts upon something which can outlive the changes of time, something like the soul itself, immortal; and whither shall we look? Must we be given up to the wretchedness of desolate affections for ever? No! It is our privilege—and this element of our nature tells us so—it is our privilege to fix our hearts upon things above, which are changeless and eternal. We may, in obedience to this demand of our being, we *should*, look to heaven as the home of undying spirits, and long for union with them there, to be separated no more. We may, our heart's best promptings demand that we *should*, prepare for loving the Enthroned One for ever and ever; and if here on earth, as the apostle teaches, the love of Him seen only by faith fills the breast with "joy unspeakable and full of glory," surely the realization of his presence will meet all the yearnings of the heart.

There is then, in every vicissitude which removes from us an object beloved, a voice of Providence, distinctly saying to us, "Look away from earth for your objects of chief affection; objects worthy and undying are found alone in heaven!"

V. Finally, the strong persuasion which the soul has of a continuance of being beyond this life, and its fears lest it may not all be well in that state, is a presumption of an endless future, and an ever present motive to live with respect to it.

All, save him who would gladly be rid of himself, if only he

might thereby escape the retributions of an accusing conscience, shrink back from the dreadful thought of annihilation; they will not, they cannot believe that the grave shall end them. To cease to be, to have consciousness suspended, the light of intelligence put out—to live no more! Terrific thought! Ah! how it makes the soul

> ——"shrink back upon itself,
> And startle at destruction."

Could you enter the secret chamber of the professed unbeliever's soul, you should hear anxious inquiries making it manifest that his own convictions of immortality are too strong for him. "What if there *should be* another life! What if those who have left us *are* exploring the domains of an undefined futurity! What if the Bible *be not* a fiction! Startling thought! What if *I* should never die!"

And who does not under such conviction revolve seriously the probability whether the eternity before him shall be one of joy or sorrow? Who commits high-handed sin without being possessed with at least a momentary fear lest the Omniscient Eye saw it, and the angel recorder wrote it down against a final account? Who can rid himself of all fear that there is in the untried realities of another world a punishment for those who love not God?

And why is the soul of man thus persuaded without a line of argument that it shall never die? Why thus fearful that it may not live in heaven? The answer is obvious. God has a witness in the moral being which asserts the great truth of immortality. He has constituted his creature so that he almost intuitively believes in perpetuity of existence because eternity *is* before him. He fears that all may not be well with him because a world of woe *is* appointed for the wicked. He trembles to commit outbreaking sin because the remorse which agitates his bosom is but the *harbinger* of a more fearful retribution to follow upon unrepented wrong. And in all these convictions and anxieties is God prompting him to such effort as may secure admission to heaven.

1. The subject, thus treated, affords in its inferences—first, a striking proof of God's benevolent desire to save all his creatures.

That they may not fail of blessedness at last, he has impressed his warnings and his lessons of instruction upon their very natures, so that they cannot lose or entirely deface them.

He has as it were appointed to each man on earth a minister of truth, a friendly Mentor to attend him in all his goings, ceaselessly to remind him of his destiny and his duty; and if after all this one shall fail of eternal life, witnesses will rise up in his own

bosom to swear that he has not perished unwarned, and that his retribution is just.

2. The subject also vindicates the righteousness of God in his declared purpose to call all men to his bar for judgment, and to reward them according to the deeds done in the body.

It were manifest injustice that any should be condemned and punished without light sufficient, if improved, to guide them in the way to heaven; and such injustice belongs not to the Holy One. Some have received the clear light of the gospel, by that light shall be judged, and, if wanting in the conditions of forgiveness, be condemned. But others, to whom the blessing of Revelation has never come, shall be found without excuse; for the light of nature shone upon their path, and the promptings of nature in their breasts were most decided. They might have reached the heavenly world, but in blind folly they shut their eyes to the light afforded, and shut their ears to the pleadings in their own bosoms—the ceaseless, urgent pleadings of God's love. Such is the teaching of the Gentile apostle: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Thus shall be wiped away every stain of unrighteousness from the record of that great day's proceedings, that the heathen had knowledge and warning enough for salvation if it had been improved; and this it is that must make the sinner under the gospel more guilty, and fearfully augment his condemnation, that the full splendor of the Word dawned upon his path. Ah! fearful enough to have sinned and perished against the convictions of natural reason and conscience; but if there are degrees of award to the finally lost, as Inspiration teaches, in a lower place than is occupied by spirits lost from the benighted land, room! for the rejector of the gospel—room!

3. And lastly, the subject teaches the unbeliever in Revelation, that though he abjures the written Word, yet the law of God impressed upon his moral nature holds him to a faith in an eternal state of being, and to an ordering of his life with reference to that state.

Will one free himself from religious obligations, it is not enough that he denies that prophets spake and seraphs wrote by the inspiration of God, and poets sang as his Spirit was upon them. It is not enough that the Great Teacher shall be pronounced an impostor, and his apostles be denied a hearing as fanatic and deluded men.

A law and a gospel yet remain written on the very constitution of his earthly state. He must first blank his own moral nature, or still is he bound "by patient continuance in well doing to seek for glory and honor and immortality."

In the violence of skepticism, though we should destroy that blessed volume which "brings life and immortality to light," and which has guided so many pilgrims from this dark world to their home in heaven, yet

> "A voice within us speaks that startling word,
> Man! thou shalt never die!"

and reason answers, "Live! live for that eternity to which thou art bound."

Ah, time-serving mortal! though you may have never obeyed the warning words of Jesus, yet heed these lessons of your earthly state, and begin to raise your affection "to things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Pass not, pass not to your solemn future with life's great work unperformed, lest not only a God of revelation, but thine own soul also, rise up in the place of judgment and demand thy condemnation!

MORAL INFLUENCE.

No thoughtful mind can dwell without emotion on the accountability to which every intelligent being is held by his Maker for the moral influences which he allows to affect him, and the character which he shall be found to possess in the great day of account. But with what an aspect of solemnity is individual responsibility invested, when viewed as embracing, not only the moral character which each one himself possesses, but the influence which he is every moment exerting in giving character to the moral dispositions and acts of others! The idea of contributing, even to the least extent, towards what is so full of vital and eternal concern to an immortal being as his moral character, is startling. How much more so when it is considered that the influence every one is exerting to form the moral character, and thus to decide the eternal destiny of others, is not likely to be of small extent; that, though in the first instance limited and seemingly trifling, it has the property of perpetuating itself in unending progression and ever-widening circles. As a pebble cast into the ocean raises a ripple that widens and still widens, and continues to expand till it breaks on the opposite shore; so, even a trifling act may raise a ripple on the ocean of influence which will go on steadily increasing, each circle becoming wider and wider, till it reaches the shores of eternity. On the summit of some snow-capped mountain, a few snow-flakes, coming in contact, commence their descent together. The ball, at first too

insignificant to attract notice, swells by constant accretions, till now it looms, a stupendous mass, on the brow of the mountain; and now, a mighty avalanche, it rushes thundering down, carrying devastation and death in its path. A spark of fire falls among the tall grass on the prairie; a drop of water might extinguish it; but, fanned to a flame by the breeze, it enkindles and spreads, till soon one broad expanse of flame outreaches the view, and defies all earthly power to quell. Thus, a word, spoken perhaps in thoughtlessness, or even a look, a cast of the human features or glance of the eye, may set in motion a train of influences that shall go onward, widening and strengthening in its progress, till time shall be no longer. Then, in the day of final consummation and award, shall first its true extent, its manifold relations, and its mighty results be known.

An humble, devoted follower of Christ goes forth on a Sabbath morning, and gathers from the streets a few degraded, outcast children, and instils into their dark minds the elements of Christian truth. It was a simple, unpretending act; but what has been he result? The establishment of Sabbath-schools, with all the wide-spread and beneficent influences that have emanated from that institution. Make now the attempt to follow but a single line of those influences, and where does it lead us? A ragged, deserted, friendless boy, wandering in the streets of London, is accosted by the kind voice of that devoted Christian laborer. He is taken by the hand and led to the place of instruction. As he listens to the story of the Cross, unfolded in the simple but earnest lessons of the faithful teacher, a new light dawns upon his dark mind. His heart is melted; in humble penitence he lays himself at the feet of the Saviour of sinners, and, with his soul loosed from its bondage and burning with love, inquires, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Obedient to the sovereign word and to the impulses of his own renewed heart, he goes forth to tell those without hope and without God, as he had been, of the Saviour he has found. He unlocks the gospel of that Saviour from a strange tongue, and gives it, in their own language, to the two hundred millions of a land which darkness had covered. The faithful missionary has long since gone to his rest; but who shall estimate the extent of that influence which, tracing back to the humble labors of a Sabbath-school teacher, shall end, and its results appear, only when the redeemed of China are numbered with the Church triumphant?

None are exempt from this moral power, however obscure their station, or small their talents. The humble Christian, as he rises, self-distrusting, and speaks in faint and faltering accents of his love to the Saviour, little thinks of the influence he is exerting;

yet those broken sentences have sunk into the proud and hardened heart of the infidel, and been the means of his salvation.

A faithful Christian mother teaches her infant son to lisp, "Our Father." With her soft hand upon his head, she kneels beside him, and, with that earnestness which none but a mother feels, invokes Heaven's blessing on her darling boy. The boy becomes a man; and long, long years after that sainted mother has sunk to her rest, the pressure of that hand is felt on his brow, and those tender, earnest tones, interceding at the throne of mercy in his behalf, still linger in his ears. An influence from that sacred scene evermore hovers near him in his pathway through life, like a spirit of goodness, calling him away from vice, and wooing him to holiness and heaven.

CHRISTIAN! to you God may have given but humble talents, little wealth, and an obscure station; but he has given to you *influence over immortal beings.* Guard it as an inviolable trust! Thus, it may be for immortality and eternal life to others, and for a crown of glory to your own head. Abused, it may be your own condemnation, and to your fellows everlasting woe.—*New-York Recorder.*

THE GOSPEL PRECIOUS.

OH, precious gospel! Will any merciless hand endeavor to tear away from our hearts this best, this last, and sweetest consolation? Would you darken the only avenue through which one ray of hope can enter? Would you tear from the aged and infirm poor the only prop on which their souls can repose in peace? Would you deprive the dying of their only source of consolation? Would you rob the world of its richest treasure? Would you let loose the flood-gates of every vice, and bring back upon the earth the horrors of superstition, or the atrocities of atheism? Then endeavor to subvert the gospel; throw around you the firebrands of infidelity; laugh at religion, and make a mock of futurity; but be assured, for all these things God will bring you into judgment. I will persuade myself that a regard for the welfare of their country, if no higher motive, will induce men to respect the Christian religion. And every pious heart will say, Rather let the light of the sun be extinguished than the precious light of the gospel.—*Dr. Archibald Alexander.*

be refreshed by it, and even some dying life may be saved. Thus it is that consequences of infinite moment may depend on what we call little things, so that there is no safety for us except in having *all* our *little* things as well as great ones under the care of our heavenly Father. We must put them at his disposal, seek his guidance in all things, seek him in constant prayer, and never be without God in the world. We must have an eye single to his approbation, and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, endeavor so to arrange all things as shall be for his glory. This is truly the only safe way, for God's providence acts in little things as well as great; and if we are coöperating with him, he will cause *all* things to turn out well, and besides guiding our *successions* of little things into a great and blessed *whole*, he will often invest *single* little things with influences, and attend them with consequences of great glory.

It is by little and little that in such a world as this we must do the greater part of the good that we ever accomplish. He that is faithful in great things, is faithful also in the least; and if he be not faithful in small things, God will not give him the opportunity to be so in large ones. Indeed, it is only by the discipline of faithfulness in small things that a man can be prepared to do good on a great scale. If a man waits for great opportunities, or a great occasion, or a great position, before beginning to do good with all his might, before beginning to exert his influence in all things for God and truth and liberty and righteousness, then, when the occasion comes, or the position is offered, the man himself will certainly be found wanting. The spirit of the man can be trained for great occasions only gradually, and by a discipline and habit of integrity, firmness, and faithfulness in minor emergencies, and in regard to constant calls of duty. It is as if a man, contemplating a height to be gained, should say, I will not take a step up the ladder till I can go from top to bottom at a bound. Well, you never will be there in that way. You must go up step by step, or not at all. It is not given to man to spring at once to grand attainments, or great usefulness, or great influence. He cannot wing his way over intervening obstacles, but must grapple with them, and overcome them, one by one. The greatest promises from God himself take this into consideration. No man can do good in any other way, in any sphere whatever, nor gain any lasting good by any other arrangement.

What is surer than God's great promise in regard to children, that if you train them up faithfully for him, he will take care of them, and bless them, and make them his? But the result of good character and heavenly habits with *them* depends upon the daily, familiar, minute, but ever-recurring examples set before them, and influences brought to bear upon them. The impres-

believe that any work at all, of permanence, is possible. Yet the work goes on. The seed cast into the heart may be smaller, more imperceptible, than any of the seeds ever dropped into the earth for the harvest, and how it germinates, or when, you may not be able to see, yet it grows. Just as the husbandman casts his seed into the ground, and goes his way, and it groweth while he is waking and sleeping, he knoweth not how, and first comes forth the tender blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Also the kingdom of heaven is as leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. Almost invisible and indistinguishable at any one moment, yet the work is mighty in the end.

It is by little and little, too, that every man's character is formed. Most persons' *guilty* character is made of little sins. They may be scarcely noticed at the time, but a constant succession of them makes a great weight. Whether impulses or actions, the succession of them, uninterrupted for years, may make habits as unchangeable as the skin of the Ethiopian, spots as unremovable as the spots of the leopard. Most persons' *Christian* character, too, is made up of little things. The Christian *spirit* must enter into *all* things, and then all things become great in the light of heaven. But the Christian character may be almost spoiled by little sins, or what are called such. If our consciences were tender and wakeful, and our hearts filled with love to our Saviour, no sin would seem a little sin. How much meaning there is in that exclamation of Wesley's, "I want a sensibility to sin, a pain to feel it near." Sensibility to sin is what we very much want, especially in a time of worldly conformity so great as the present. Little sins, whether of omissions or commissions, make sad havoc with a man's piety. If a man is heedless in regard to them, he cannot walk closely with God, nor have peace of conscience, nor the comforting presence of the Saviour. They render fervent prayer impossible. Watchfulness against sin of every kind constitutes a part of that faithfulness which the Lord Jesus inculcates, when he commands us to be sober, and to watch unto prayer. Christians must watch against little sins, in conduct and conversation, in their temper and disposition, and daily deportment; for if they give way to little evils daily, there is a great amount of sin unnoticed and unrepented of upon the conscience, but which grieves the Spirit of God, and prevents a filial access to the mercy-seat. The conscience of some persons is like a carpet never swept, into which the particles of sand and coal are ground and trodden, till the texture is all worn away.

Almost every important thing depends upon little things often repeated. Any great change of character taking place in one day is not frequent. There is preparation for it in many things,

many influences. Ordinarily, the particular impression which our days make, the seal which they leave upon us, for evil or for good, is scarcely noticed, scarcely to be measured, and yet, in the end, their work with us is great and eternal. Three hundred and sixty-five days in a year! Every day comes down a blow from the hammer of time upon the anvil of circumstance, for the forming of character. Sometimes the blows are stronger, sometimes weaker, but no one of them alone does the work. Three hundred and sixty-five days! Not one of them but might have been dropped out, and no great change of character have been the result, yet all of them important, all of them contributing to the character of the year. There may have been particular days that, by reason of some peculiar visitation from God, have been so marked as never to be forgotten, and so filled with impression and power, by his word, his providence, or his grace, as almost to govern all the rest of the year. This may have been the case with some particular Sabbath; but ordinarily, one day is much like another, one Sabbath like the rest, and, alas! with very many persons the Sabbath is very like the week. The sun ariseth and the sun goeth down; the wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; the thing that hath been, it is that that shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun. But when the year is gone, a great mark has been made, a great journey has been travelled, a great record has been written for the judgment, a great confirmation has been made of signs and anticipations in regard to a man's career and character one way or another; aud yet it may seem as if the absence of any one day would have made no great difference.

It seems a very little thing to live near to God one day; it *is* a very great thing: but still, to do it for one day does not seem so great a task; not so great a thing but that the Christian, by the help of God, may easily accomplish it for one day. But if this little thing were accomplished *every day*, *every* one day in the year, then the whole would be infinitely glorious. On the other hand, to a man forgetful of God, it seems but a very little evil which is wrought with the character in one day, perhaps none at all, if there be no marked crime. A man does not ordinarily feel worse to-day than he did yesterday. There is no self-recording log-book in the conscience, or calculation of the latitude and longitude, or moral barometer to tell him what the weather is, or how far he has gone. And yet he has gone on He may have gone but a little farther; nevertheless, a certain number of those imperceptible advancements bring him to his destiny, both of character and retribution, for eternity.

All the steps, successively, that lead either to heaven or hell, are small, one by one, except in great crimes, and even then

there has been a gradual preparation for them, a great many unobserved steps towards them; or, on the contrary side towards heaven, the steps are small one by one, except in the great interposition of the Holy Spirit in the work of conversion, and the great first turning of the soul towards God; and even *there* also, there have been a great many steps, on the part both of God and man, unheeded, unknown at present in their bearing and influence. All the successive steps, in the way either to heaven or hell, are small, one by one, yet in the aggregate how mighty is the journey! Every separate step, however small, takes a vast meaning and importance from the character that directed it; and again reacts for the strengthening and confirming of character. Every thing, moral and physical, is an aggregate of minor things. All the steps between two distant cities are small one by one, but the journey is a great thing. All the revolutions made by the wheels of a great steamer are small one by one, but the motion is mighty, and the progress great. All the coral insects of the sea are helpless and almost invisible one by one, yet the aggregate of their individual work and deposit may construct islands and continents, that shall rise from the ocean, to remain till the globe perishes. All the evaporations from the sea and the land are in particles of moisture, insensible one by one, yet the streams that water the earth, the sounding cataracts and mighty rivers, are sustained by the process. All the thoughts, words, and actions of a man may be minute and commonplace, undistinguished, each by each, for any thing remarkably good, or remarkably evil; and yet the result is CHARACTER for ETERNITY.

Besides, any one of those thoughts, words, or actions may have led to *results* of eternal and immeasurable consequence for good or evil. What is more commonplace than vain and wandering thoughts? Yet a vain or wanton thought indulged may, by itself alone, ruin the soul, and ruin other souls. What is more commonplace than idle words? Yet one idle word, falling into a prepared place, may do a world of mischief, just as a single spark, falling on a train of gunpowder, may blow up a fortress, and destroy thousands. The greatest actions, both of good and evil, have begun with thoughts, sometimes random thoughts. A thousand such may come and go so idly that you cannot trace them, but at length one among a thousand is pursued, and not only comes *from* the heart, but afterwrads leads and governs both heart and life, permanently. Or it is dropped in a casual remark, and being received as a germ in some other mind, takes root, and produces vast results for time and eternity. A little spring lost among the marshes, a strain of poetry has said, is a little and a helpless thing; but if some kind and careful hand, under a benevolent impulse, recovers it, walls it in, and hangs a ladle at the brim, thousands of thirsty wayfarers may

be refreshed by it, and even some dying life may be saved. Thus it is that consequences of infinite moment may depend on what we call little things, so that there is no safety for us except in having *all* our *little* things as well as great ones under the care of our heavenly Father. We must put them at his disposal, seek his guidance in all things, seek him in constant prayer, and never be without God in the world. We must have an eye single to his approbation, and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, endeavor so to arrange all things as shall be for his glory. This is truly the only safe way, for God's providence acts in little things as well as great; and if we are coöperating with him, he will cause *all* things to turn out well, and besides guiding our *successions* of little things into a great and blessed *whole*, he will often invest *single* little things with influences, and attend them with consequences of great glory.

It is by little and little that in such a world as this we must do the greater part of the good that we ever accomplish. He that is faithful in great things, is faithful also in the least; and if he be not faithful in small things, God will not give him the opportunity to be so in large ones. Indeed, it is only by the discipline of faithfulness in small things that a man can be prepared to do good on a great scale. If a man waits for great opportunities, or a great occasion, or a great position, before beginning to do good with all his might, before beginning to exert his influence in all things for God and truth and liberty and righteousness, then, when the occasion comes, or the position is offered, the man himself will certainly be found wanting. The spirit of the man can be trained for great occasions only gradually, and by a discipline and habit of integrity, firmness, and faithfulness in minor emergencies, and in regard to constant calls of duty. It is as if a man, contemplating a height to be gained, should say, I will not take a step up the ladder till I can go from top to bottom at a bound. Well, you never will be there in that way. You must go up step by step, or not at all. It is not given to man to spring at once to grand attainments, or great usefulness, or great influence. He cannot wing his way over intervening obstacles, but must grapple with them, and overcome them, one by one. The greatest promises from God himself take this into consideration. No man can do good in any other way, in any sphere whatever, nor gain any lasting good by any other arrangement.

What is surer than God's great promise in regard to children, that if you train them up faithfully for him, he will take care of them, and bless them, and make them his? But the result of good character and heavenly habits with *them* depends upon the daily, familiar, minute, but ever-recurring examples set before them, and influences brought to bear upon them. The impres-

sions that form their characters from the outset are as little drops falling on the rock, and wearing it, never at once, but by perseverance, repetition, continuance. What can one drop do? It falls, and is gone, and leaves no traces. The most perfect microscope or measuring instrument that ever could be made would not be able to detect the impression made by one drop. And yet the permanence, the incessant repetition, of this feeble, trifling agency, so small as to be entirely imperceptible, may at length furrow and disintegrate the very granite. That is but a symbol of what may be done with souls.

But I say *God's providence* takes care of single little things also, and oftentimes makes much out of them, or hangs much upon them. I think it was Hannah More who once recorded an instance of a gay lady returning from a midnight party at cards, and finding her maid-servant reading a religious book. "Poor melancholy thing," said she, "what pleasure can you find in poring over such a book?" But even in her own careless glance upon it, there was one word that met her eye, and followed her to her retirement, and at length filled her with so much distress, that her maid came to her in anxiety to know what it was that troubled her. She burst into a flood of tears, exclaiming, "Oh! it was one word in your book that has taken hold upon me, and that word is ETERNITY!" And by God's grace it led to an earnest preparation *for* Eternity.

But this is by no means a solitary instance. "I can never forget," said a pious man once to a friend, "that one word which was whispered to me once in a meeting for religious inquiry." "What word was it?" "It was the word ETERNITY. A young Christian friend, who was yearning for my salvation, came up to me as I sat in my pew, and simply whispered *Eternity* in my ear, with great solemnity and tenderness, and then left me. That word made me *think*, and I found no peace till I came to the cross."

It is said that Harlan Page once went through his Sabbath-school to get some spiritual census in regard to its condition. Coming to one of the teachers, he said, "Shall I put you down as having a hope in Christ?" The teacher replied *no*. "Then," said Mr. Page very tenderly, "I will put you down as having no hope." He closed his little book and left him; but that single remark was blessed of God, and therefore was enough to distress the young man so deeply, that he could find no peace till he gained a hope in Christ's saving mercy. Take another instance. A female member of a Christian church not long since overtook a lady on her way to the prayer-meeting. She asked the young person if she never thought of her own salvation? The lady thus addressed replied that during all her life she had never had one word spoken to her before concerning the salvation of her

soul. But this one affectionate question had God's blessing. Within a few weeks from that time she became a devoted member of the fold of Christ.

Thus God works. It is said to have been a single remark of Rev. Charles Simeon, in regard to the blessings which had resulted from the labors of Dr. Carey in India, that first arrested the attention of Henry Martyn to the cause of missions. His mind began to stir under the new thought, and a perusal of the Life of Brainerd fixed him in his resolution to give himself to his Redeemer in the service of preaching the gospel to the dying heathen.

A great many such cases might be cited; and the recurrence of such instances should teach us never to be discouraged in trying to do good. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, nor whether they may not both alike have God's blessing. Blessed are they that sow beside all waters, that are ready for all opportunities. None can tell what God may do with a single word, a single remark, a single question. Even when the case seems most hopeless, the seed may be taking root. The arrow, though feebly shot, may be lodged in the conscience. The heavenly minister in Scotland, Mr. McCheyne, was once riding past a coal quarry, and stopped to look in at the fire-room of the engine-house. The fireman had just opened the door to feed the furnace with fresh fuel. Mr. McCheyne observed it for a moment in solemn meditation, and then, pointing to the bright glowing flame, said in a gentle tone to the man, but full of meaning, "Does that fire remind you of any thing?" If I remember right, he afterwards stated the impression made upon his own soul by the recall, in lively power, of the Scripture imagery of perdition, the worm that never dieth, the fire that never shall be quenched. But he just simply asked, "Does that fire remind *you* of any thing?" The question, from such a devout and praying heart, was not left with the man merely; it was left with God, and God's blessing accompanied it. It proved an effectual arrow of conviction, roused his conscience as with the power of guilt and hell, led him to the house of God, and may have been to him the gate of heaven. Thus it is that God can make little means divinely powerful. Therefore despise not the day of small things, for none can tell what God may do. Be not weary in well doing, for in due season thou shalt reap, if thou faint not. It is one characteristic of the righteous, that *whatsoever* he doeth shall prosper. *Nothing can be lost that is done for God.* If you do not see the glory of it now, nor the success of it, you shall see the reward of it hereafter. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

there has been a gradual preparation for them, a great many unobserved steps towards them; or, on the contrary side towards heaven, the steps are small one by one, except in the great interposition of the Holy Spirit in the work of conversion, and the great first turning of the soul towards God; and even *there* also, there have been a great many steps, on the part both of God and man, unheeded, unknown at present in their bearing and influence. All the successive steps, in the way either to heaven or hell, are small, one by one, yet in the aggregate how mighty is the journey! Every separate step, however small, takes a vast meaning and importance from the character that directed it; and again reacts for the strengthening and confirming of character. Every thing, moral and physical, is an aggregate of minor things. All the steps between two distant cities are small one by one, but the journey is a great thing. All the revolutions made by the wheels of a great steamer are small one by one, but the motion is mighty, and the progress great. All the coral insects of the sea are helpless and almost invisible one by one, yet the aggregate of their individual work and deposit may construct islands and continents, that shall rise from the ocean, to remain till the globe perishes. All the evaporations from the sea and the land are in particles of moisture, insensible one by one, yet the streams that water the earth, the sounding cataracts and mighty rivers, are sustained by the process. All the thoughts, words, and actions of a man may be minute and commonplace, undistinguished, each by each, for any thing remarkably good, or remarkably evil; and yet the result is CHARACTER for ETERNITY.

Besides, any one of those thoughts, words, or actions may have led to *results* of eternal and immeasurable consequence for good or evil. What is more commonplace than vain and wandering thoughts? Yet a vain or wanton thought indulged may, by itself alone, ruin the soul, and ruin other souls. What is more commonplace than idle words? Yet one idle word, falling into a prepared place, may do a world of mischief, just as a single spark, falling on a train of gunpowder, may blow up a fortress, and destroy thousands. The greatest actions, both of good and evil, have begun with thoughts, sometimes random thoughts. A thousand such may come and go so idly that you cannot trace them, but at length one among a thousand is pursued, and not only comes *from* the heart, but afterwrads leads and governs both heart and life, permanently. Or it is dropped in a casual remark, and being received as a germ in some other mind, takes root, and produces vast results for time and eternity. A little spring lost among the marshes, a strain of poetry has said, is a little and a helpless thing; but if some kind and careful hand, under a benevolent impulse, recovers it, walls it in, and hangs a ladle at the brim, thousands of thirsty wayfarers may

SERMON DLXXVI.

BY REV. CHARLES ADAM SMITH,

PASTOR OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH, EASTON, PA.

CHRISTIANS THE SALT OF THE EARTH—THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—MATT. v. 13–16.

In these words, believers are denominated the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. The use of salt in connection with the temple sacrifices in the worship of the Jews, was not without significance. It was emblematic of the covenant into which God had entered with his people; of the grace that existed in the souls of the pious; of the purity of heart which God required of those who presented their oblations to Him; and of the influence of their conduct and conversation upon an ungodly world. In comparing his disciples to salt, therefore, the Saviour evidently means that the influence of their holy principles is essential to the moral health and progress of mankind—to the advancement and permanency of all the best interests of the race. The conversation, prayers, and labors of the people of God have an agency in morals corresponding to that which salt has in the kingdom of nature. They arrest the progress of iniquity, and keep the world from that extreme corruption which would bring sure destruction upon it.

Believers are also "the light of the world;" they are like a city that is set upon a hill and cannot be hid. In other words, they stand on a moral eminence. They make pretensions to principles which others do not possess. They are the children of God, and by the position they occupy, invite the world around them to examine the evidence of the fellowship they have with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. They are said to be meek and lowly, self-denying, benevolent, and forgiving, patient in tribulation, and rejoicing in persecution. They profess to be honest, pure, temperate, and virtuous. All who belong to the

visible church, so far as profession is concerned, stand on this eminence. They cannot be hid: whether pure or corrupt, whether true or faithless to their vows of consecration, there they are, nominally joined to the people of God. They have entered into solemn covenant with the Almighty, and in the eyes of the world are identified with those who bear his likeness.

I. Let us look at the Christian in the exercise of some of the graces mentioned by our Saviour in the foregoing verses, and we shall see with what propriety he may be called the salt of the earth.

1. Witness the conservative power of the Church in a single direction. Whence comes the voice of peace that now begins to be distinctly heard among civilized nations? Whence that cry of indignation so widely and so loudly uttered against war and its fearful cost of human happiness and life? It proceeds from the Church of Christ—from that spirit of peace which pervades the religion of the Bible. In almost every sanctuary, and in thousands of dwellings throughout the land, prayers are continually ascending to God that there may be peace on the earth. Christian effort is busy in enlightening the public mind. Much of the language, and many of the arguments employed in favor of this state of things, are derived from the Word of God. The authority of that Word is urged, and the obligation of its positive requirements. War is denounced, not only as a physical, but chiefly as a *moral* evil. If, then, it is on the authority of the Bible that this reformation is principally urged, the movements that contemplate it are certainly to be traced to the followers of the Prince of Peace, and the influence of his religion upon the heart. The world may unite in these efforts, from the persuasion that its own interests are involved; but that such efforts do not originate in the spirit of the world, is evident from the fact, that in no country destitute of the gospel, as far as we know, has such a blessing as universal and perpetual peace ever been dreamed of; and also from another fact even more conclusive, viz.: that notwithstanding the revealed will and intentions of God, notwithstanding the moral evils of war, and the guilt of its prosecution when it can by any possibility be avoided, worldly men generally of influence and standing in this Christian land, so far as we can see, care not to have its ferocious spirit superseded by the gentler spirit of Christian forbearance, concession, and love.

2. Follow the child of God as he pursues other lines of conduct, and exemplifies in his actions other graces of character, all showing the fitness of the emblem here applied to him. Look, for instance, at a single one of the practical results of the disposition referred to by our Saviour when he says, "Blessed are the merciful." Follow the believer as he yields to the operation of this gracious temper of his soul. Mark the exercise of his

compassion, the restraining influence which it sometimes exerts over an individual who is tempted to sin against God. Go with him to the dwelling of poverty as he deals his bread to the hungry, covers the naked, and administers consolation to the afflicted. Those acts of Christian kindness and sympathy may, and in all probability often do save their objects from crime, and from that distrust of God in which it often originates. The neglected poor, there is reason to believe, are sometimes tempted to take unlawfully from the rich what Christian sympathy should have provided for them; and many crimes, especially in countries where the inequality between the condition of the rich and the poor is greater than in ours, may be traced to extreme want. If, then, the exercise of that compassion which the gospel inculcates does in any way ward off temptation and thus prevent open sin; if, like a ministering angel, it often brings to the poor man a better joy than that of the world, points him to the wealth of heaven, and guides him to its possession; surely those who exercise this temper deserve to be called "the salt of the earth."

3. And when we view Christians earnestly and prayerfully endeavoring to win souls from death; when, in answer to their supplications, and as the fruit of their labors, we see the sinner returning to God unburdened of guilt, divested of fear, baptized with the Holy Ghost, and rejoicing in hope of the glory to come; of those who have been instrumental of such blessed results we are constrained to declare most emphatically, "Ye are the salt of the earth."

We might gather other illustrations, did time permit, from the moral changes that have taken place in the world, in all ages, through the influence of the pious. We might speak of the fate of Sodom, or the world at the flood, as examples of the certain ruin that must overwhelm communities when the moral corruption that prevails is too powerful for the reforming influences that remain; and as proofs of the fact that the preservation of the race from entire corruption depends upon the practical piety of the righteous. When Abraham interceded for Sodom, God promised to save the city if only ten righteous persons could be found within it. And why did He make this promise? Probably because the fidelity of ten faithful servants of God might have arrested the progress of licentiousness, and worked a gradual reformation. But there was not even this small amount of conservative influence to be found; and God, in destroying the Sodomites by a special calamity, only anticipated by a brief space the natural consequences of their wickedness; as, left to themselves, they would doubtless ere long have been consumed by the fires of their own licentiousness. How widely would injustice, insubordination, intemperance, and licentiousness now pre-

vail, and how completely would mankind be controlled by the darkest passions of their nature, were it not for the influence of those whose lives are regulated by the principles of the religion of Christ! Truly they are the salt of the earth, to whom the world is indebted for its progress in civilization; for those moral enterprises that have so signally benefited the race; for those examples and prayers which, as means, are efficacious to the conversion of sinners. It is the Church that secures to the world the blessings bestowed upon it.

It is the duty of the Church to labor for the renovation of the world. The Christian witnesses a mass of moral corruption around him. God has placed him in the midst of this mass, that he may act on it for good. How may he do this? By a conversation such as becometh the gospel; walking in wisdom towards them that are without; having his speech always seasoned with the salt of grace, marked by discretion and purity, and measurably consistent with his high profession.

II. Believers are also denominated "the light of the world." This title, which Christ elsewhere applies to himself, he here gives to his disciples. We see from this the relation which Christians sustain to their Supreme Head. They reflect his light, the light of the "Sun of Righteousness." They are workers together with him. From him they receive their principles of action, their knowledge of doctrine.

1. And here we remark: The Christian should be able to communicate to others the leading truths of the gospel; he should constantly illustrate the nature and power of those truths in a holy life.

Christ is preëminently the light of the world. Why? Because in all matters pertaining to the life of the soul he is a safe guide. He has told the sinner why he is lost, and how he may be saved. The depravity of human nature, the atonement made for sin, faith and repentance, and the agency of the Spirit in the work of conversion, are all distinctly set forth in his teachings.

In reference to all these leading doctrines of the gospel, it is highly important that Christians should have their own minds so enlightened as to be able to guide others. Without this enlightenment, how can parents lead their children in the path of life?—without it, how can any Christian answer the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" We do not say that private Christians should become learned in theological science; but we do say, they should become familiar with the Bible—should have clear views of all its leading and essential doctrines, so as to be able to communicate them to others. Thus only can they properly be called, in this respect, the light of the world.

But practical godliness is more important than the theoretical knowledge of doctrine. True, they ought to be combined; but

if there is defectiveness any where, let it be in the intellect and not in the heart. If the heart is savingly enlightened, the truth will shine out in the life. There is nothing so much to be deplored as darkness here. Said Paul to the Corinthians, "Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men; written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." The present age surpasses that of the apostles in the facilities enjoyed for the diffusion of knowledge. The press multiplies, as if by miracle, the records of eternal truth; the Bible is translated into and printed in many of the languages of the earth; and the scene of Pentecost, when persons of different nations heard in their own tongues the wonderful works of God, appears almost to be renewed. But does the present equal that primitive age of the gospel in the number of *living* epistles that are scattered throughout the world? Is the writing of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of believers as plainly seen now as it was then? When we talk of poverty of spirit, meekness, forbearance, mercy, forgiveness, purity of heart, and the joyful endurance of persecution for righteousness' sake, the world knows not by experience what we mean, and men of the world will naturally look to our example to ascertain what these virtues and graces of character are. If, then, instead of meekness, they observe in those who profess to follow Christ impatience and pride; if, instead of mercy and compassion, they discover avarice and selfish indifference to the condition of others; if, instead of purity of heart, they discover the proofs of worldly-mindedness and sensuality, will they not err in the conceptions they form of religion and its influence? Who would not hesitate to say, even in the exercise of the largest charity, of many nominal Christians, "Ye are the light of the world," because, instead of reflecting in their conduct the light of divine truth, they appear to be in thick darkness and in the shadow of moral death?

2. We have a conclusive argument in this passage against retirement from the social activities of life, and against that system of religion which recommends this as the best and most acceptable way of serving God: "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." Does not the Church of Rome practically deny this declaration of our Lord? Had Christ expressly mentioned the "great apostasy," he could not have alluded more plainly to one gross error of its system, viz.: that monks and nuns, in their cloisters and other hiding-places, offer to God a purer service than do those who despise not the social relations which God himself has instituted. Supposing these individuals to be truly and conscientiously engaged in the service of Christ, their lives to be exemplary, and able to bear

the test of the world's scrutiny, what right have they to *conceal* their light? Who has authorized them to refuse to the world the benefit of their holy living? Why keep secret what the world ought to know and see, if it be reputable and pure, and of good report? In religion, and in every enterprise that professedly recognizes its principles, and claims to be based upon them, nothing should be hid. Let all that is undertaken for God and his cause be performed in the light of day. This is the rule laid down in our text, as well as in the discourse of the Saviour with Nicodemus, when he says: "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." What shall we say then of that system of religion whose policy is to conceal many of the actions of its supporters; a religion that has classes and orders of men and women, who are bound by their vows to practise their goodness in secret? Must not a system so entirely at variance with the dictates and the strongest instincts of our nature, and opposed also to the express injunction of Christ, often excite the suspicion that many acts thus secretly performed will not bear the light; that the system itself, if not the characters of those who practise it, is both described and condemned in these words of our Saviour: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved"? Truth, spoken or acted, fears not the light; it always courts and challenges investigation; and no action should be purposely concealed that claims truth as its source, and the good of mankind and the glory of God as its end. Always and every where should the Christian let his light shine. He has no right to conceal it. The world is to have the benefit of all those actions which serve to exemplify the nature and influence of true religion. This advantage he cannot deny to those around him, without setting aside the appointment of Christ.

3. But our text brings us a step farther. "A city that is set upon a hill *cannot* be hid." The lesson here taught is, if religion really exists it cannot be concealed. Certainly this inference is unavoidable in regard to those who mingle in the busy scenes of life. We do not say it is impossible for individuals of real piety, under a mistaken sense of duty, to shut themselves up in cloisters and monasteries. While the thing itself is evidently opposed to the will and example of Christ and his apostles, truly converted persons may commit the error. But this only proves that there may be a sincere love of truth and a sincere effort to obey it, combined with serious misapprehension of what truth is. Witness the case of Luther: though it is worthy of remark that when the light beamed *fully* upon his mind, he came out into the world, and there let his light shine. He could not hide the talent which God had given him, when he saw there was a

larger and an open field on which to act for God and his truth. And the same enlightened views which constrained Luther to abandon the austerity and the selfish exclusiveness of monasticism, led him to condemn the whole system. The Bible told him, as it tells us, that religion is social in its character. It wants the world to act upon. It struggles like the sun to shine on all—to benefit and bless all.

Let an individual acknowledge this, and mingle in the every-day scenes of active life, and, if he is a Christian, his light *will* shine. There is a necessity for it. If there be no light, there can be no religion. Clouds sometimes conceal the brightness of the sun, yet we always know when it is day: so when the night of spiritual darkness has passed away from the converted sinner, and the Sun of Righteousness has dawned on his heart, we shall see the light, even though the brightness be partially obscured by the clouds of human imperfection.

There are some who look upon Christian experience as peculiar to the Sabbath, and the sanctuary, and the meeting for prayer. To talk of religion behind the counter, in the workshop, and in the market-place, would, in their opinion, be dragging it down from its high and appropiate position. But let us remember that Christianity is designed to regulate *all* human intercourse. *That* Christianity, therefore, which confines itself to the solemn assembly and the house of prayer, is not the Christianity of the Bible.

The Spirit of the Lord finds the sinner as a man of business. When he embraces religion, it does not require him to give up his business, if it be lawful; it only demands that the principles of the gospel should now control him in the prosecution of it. If he has hitherto depended upon misrepresentation or fraud for success, he is henceforth to be honest and candid, whether the same measure of success follow or not. If an individual, when converted, is a parent, he is not to abandon his family, but bring his religion into it. In all the affairs of life, the believer is to exhibit the meekness, patience, integrity, and purity of a child of God.

How can the Christian, in his daily associations, come in contact with the untoward influences which so abound in the world, how meet the temptations to deceive, and cheat, and labor for the gains of dishonesty, without manifesting the spirit of Christ? How can he encounter the dishonest man, or the swearer, without by look or word rebuking their wickedness? Will not the elements of darkness and corruption around him serve to display more clearly his uprightness, candor, sympathy, and compassion? Will not his stern and unbending integrity, his firm and conscientious adherence to truth, his spirit of accommodation and

self-denial, be manifest amid the opposite principles and tempers in which the world abounds? It must be so. His light will shine. In his business, in his pleasures, in his family, in the choice of his associates and familiar friends, he cannot but be governed by principles widely different from those which control others—principles which must necessarilly manifest themselves in his daily walk and conversation. If not—if professing Christians live as other men, it proves that they have never been "renewed in the spirit of their minds," their "religion is vain."

Professed disciples of Christ, are ye the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and do you "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven?" Remember, the salt may be without savor, and then it is good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Travellers tell us that on the borders of the Dead Sea, and elsewhere, where salt is found, it often retains the appearance whilst it has lost all the qualities of that substance. How sadly true is this of many nominal Christians! They have the appearance, but lack all the essential characteristics of the true followers of Christ, and must necessarily fail to exert a salutary influence upon the world. Brethren, are you doing what you can to benefit mankind? Is the world better for your living in it? Has your benevolent activity arrested one sinner, and turned him from the path of ruin into the way of life? Have your efforts and prayers, think you, had any share in giving form and impulse to any of the moral enterprises in operation around you? Has your meekness disarmed the hatred of your enemies, or at least rebuked it? Has your compassion led you to the dwellings of the poor, to the home of the suffering and disconsolate; and have you ministered to their wants? Have you ever pointed the hungry soul to Christ? Has your reigion all the freshness, vitality, and power, all the meekness, endurance, and benevolence, all the compassion and purity that are ascribed to it? Or, are you unconscious of having ever realized your true position in the world? If you have done nothing, and are now doing nothing for Christ, relinquish at once all pretensions to fellowship with him. The question is not whether you are doing no harm: are you doing any good? Not, whether you are inactive in the ways of unrighteousness, but are you laboring in the great field of effort in the midst of which God has placed you? There is no such thing as a negative Christianity, any more than there is salt without saltness. Religion is positive. Religion in the heart of an individual is the power of God, acting through his conversation and example, his labors and prayers, upon the ungodliness of men; rebuking where it does not reform; convincing of sin, where it does not

constrain to follow after holiness. If you have not such a religion, you have the form without the essential elements of piety; and of you it will be said: "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

SERMON DLXXVII.*

BY REV. ROMEO ELTON, D.D.,

LATE PROFESSOR OF ANCIENT LANGUAGES IN BROWN UNIVERSITY.

A WAY MAY SEEM RIGHT, YET LEAD TO HELL.

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death."—PROV. XVI. 25.

IN order to illustrate our text, let us imagine a large company travelling through a gloomy forest, attended by a faithful and well informed guide. The course in which he conducts them becomes rugged and dreary, while on either hand ways open which are wide, verdant, and picturesque. The travellers wish to deviate; and perceiving their guide unalterably determined to pursue his own course, they leave him. But they soon learn the way they have chosen is full of dangers. The allurements which seduced them vanish; they advance into a trackless desert; briers entangle them; the evening shadows stretch around, and they hear the roar of beasts of prey. A few are privileged to escape and rejoin their guide. Think in what terms they must describe their own horrors, and the shrieks and dying agonies of those they have left behind!

This is a true picture of human life. The world is that forest; men are those travellers; revelation is that guide; and the roar of those beasts of prey is a symbol of that far more terrible destruction that awaits the lost soul.

We all have erred and gone astray; multitudes have perished irrecoverably; and what can those who are returned in safety

---

* This sermon was composed during a late visit to the Continent of Europe, and was first preached in the Evangelical Church at Lyons. It is now published with the hope that, by the blessing of God, it may be instrumental in directing some sinner into that path which leads to happiness and heaven. AUTHOR.

do less than utter the warning voice, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." Some may be ready to ask, How can a man be blamed for walking in a way that seemeth *right*? Ought he to have chosen a way which seemeth *wrong*? And ought he to be exposed to death, to *eternal punishment*, (for that is the sense the term "death" bears in this passage,) for having chosen and walked in a way that seemed to him right?

We are all sufficiently acquainted with human nature to know that the judgment is often biased by the inclination; that we soon learn to believe what we *wish* to be true. Hence, before persons congratulate themselves on the excellence and advantages of their ways, they should consider how they came to enter on their present courses; what guidance they followed; what motives influenced them. If, instead of consulting the Word of God, they took cousel of fallible guides; if their choice resulted from a love of ease rather than a sense of duty, we shall hardly err in concluding that their ways, though seeming to them right, lead only to the second death.

We shall have noticed the chief of the destructive ways pursued by men, when we have considered, I. The way of the man of pleasure; II. The way of the thoughtless and indifferent; III. The way of the formalist; IV. The way of the self-confident man; V. The way of such as are subjects of partial conviction.

I. Mark the *man of pleasure*. We mean not him who tarries long at the wine, and whose eyes are full of adultery; he will probably own his ways to be wrong. By the man of pleasure, we mean one whose soul is engrossed by vain amusements, who loveth pleasure more than God, and on whose mind the sublime realities of the world to come make no strong or durable impression. The desire of enjoyment is common to all beings; but when all possible enjoyment is conceived to dwell within the limits of time,—a state beyond being denied, doubted, or forgotten,—our very aims are limited proportionally. The pursuits of the man of pleasure—even his most refined and intellectual enjoyments—have reference only to the present life. "God is not in all his thoughts." He tells us that, as we are sure only of the present, we need seek nothing higher than the gratification of our natural desires; that religion may perhaps serve as a lamp through the dark valley and shadow of death, but cannot fail, on the bright eminence of life, to appear unnecessary and obtrusive.

My brethren, you are sensible that such language, at least the spirit which it breathes, is current; you are equally sensible of its folly. It opposes the whole tenor of that religion which inculcates faith, patience, contrition, and self-denial, and leads to the grosser habits of the drunkard and the fornicator, con-

cerning whom an apostle declares, "they shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

II. Mark the *thoughtless and indifferent person*—the man who, being too indolent, too timid, or too superstitious to think and act for himself, borrows his system of doctrines and forms of worship from a long train of credulous ancestors, the dogmas of his priest, or the opinions prevalent around him which are considered the most reputable. I am right, he exclaims, or all these are wrong. If I do err, it is in the company of those whom I have chosen as my perpetual companions. Miserable language! evincing either the grossest stupidity, or an awfully perverted—I had almost said an *incorrigible*—heart. The will of God he totally disregards; or rather, his language implies a determination, if he can but please the world around him, to *resist* that will, and treat it with contempt. But if we do as others do, and thus in character resemble them, we shall fare as others fare. The Christian is prepared for the consequence. He follows men—the rich, the learned, and the wise—only as they follow Christ; he follows those with whom it will be his privilege and honor to associate through eternity.

Is it thus with the undecided, unprincipled man we have been describing? No. The way may seem right, it may save labor, and serve his present convenience; but death lurks at the end. The fool shall be destroyed, and his companions also; the destruction of transgressors shall be together. The word of the Almighty shall go forth, "Bind them together in bundles to burn them." There shall be in company, the odious seducer and his frail victim; the ungodly superior and the fawning dependent; the master who blasphemed, and the servant who echoed his profaneness; the prophets who prophesied falsely, and the people who loved to have it so: they shall tremble, despair, and perish together.

III. Mark the *formalist*. I mean one who is a strict observer of all the outward ceremonies of religion; the faithful adherent to her most minute forms. If you examine his Bible, you will find the leaves soiled and folded down; his advance in it is duly adjusted by the calendar; he seldom forgets morning and evening prayer; he admits no Sabbath customer during the hours of divine service; if now and then he posts his book on the sacred day, it is not until he has attended public worship at least once; and, indeed, by making up for some recollected deficiency, he thinks he does more than the Divine Lawgiver requires. There are several holy festivals he celebrates with extraordinary zeal and care. To this we may add, that his memory never fails to recall his numerous charities. He divides the circle of the day; on one side he puts all his devotion, and thither he looks for comfort when conscience disturbs him for the follies so distinctly

marked on the other side. Religion is, with him, a catalogue of words and postures and external rites. He does not take with him into the world a *principle* which will enable him to resist temptation; and when he has fallen into sin, he goes back to his formal services, thinking these may be a sufficient atonement. Or, perhaps, being habitually restrained within the bounds of decorum, he flatters himself that he was regenerated by his baptism; or that he is one of those just persons who need no repentence: as if religion were a mere name, and not an all-pervading influence; as if language were the proper substitute for feeling; as if the real Christian were not a new creature living by a divine energy, serving with affection, believing as though he saw, and hoping as though he possessed. Formality is a slow but effectual poison; it is a dead and putrid carcass laid upon the altar of Him who demands a "living sacrifice."

IV. Mark the *self-confident man.* None that I have mentioned are in greater danger.

1. There are rich men who delude themselves with the vain conceit that silver and gold, and the things which silver and gold procure, render them independent of God. And with such things they are supplied so fast, from sources so obvious and apparently certain, that they lose sight of their obligations to the Supreme Being, and are completely immersed in the succession of their short-lived, soul-destroying pleasures, so that conscience becomes every day more and more seared. Religion, they allow, is a useful engine of state, serving to awe the vulgar into submission, and keep them from political machinations. But we ask these men, What is religion, that the poor only need it? or rather, the poor ask, What have we done so meritorious, that we alone are pomoted to this honor? Religion is binding on *all;* and on all who embrace it, it confers infinite advantage and glory. Although wealthy sinners may think otherwise, the delusion will soon be dissipated. They, equally with the despised beggar, must die, and then thousands, and thousands of thousands of silver and gold will avail them no more than the dust on which they tread. Not all their splendid array, and sumptuous fare, and bowing menials, and princely estates, will save them from lifting up their eyes, being in torments.

2. Men of intellectual capacity are peculiarly prone to self-confidence. It were stupid, ungrateful, and wicked to disparage reason; but may it not be *overrated?* It is a guide, but surely not through regions it has never visited. It is a luminary: so likewise is the moon, and so are the stars; but can we, therefore, dispense with the sun? What are the discoveries of unassisted reason? Examine the sages of antiquity. Socrates, the wisest of their number, expressed his conviction that the world needed

a divine teacher. Not so the modern philosopher. It is high time, he cries, to break off the yoke of a prescribed faith; to assert boundless freedom; to open a new career. But surely, the end of his way is death, he himself being judge. He entertains not the joyful hope of a resurrection. If he does, let him point to the *basis* of his hope. His future state, in the Christian's estimation, will be far worse than non-existence. True, we should be slow to fix the charge of infidelity; we should distinguish between rejection and doubt. Yet it must not be forgotten that God has declared, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

3. There are the self-confident who trust in their fancied rectitude. Such was the self-confidence of Israel according to the flesh, described by the apostle Paul in the following words: "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence." Rom. ix. 31–33.

Judging by a standard of their own, men easily determine that they are sincere and meet for heaven. But where is the man who has obeyed the law in its spirituality and full extent? Will God justify the creature for his obedience to an *abridged* law? Is there something so meritorious in one part of a man's conduct, as to atone for the blame attaching to another part? Alas! "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," and require the divine forgiveness. They would insure our immediate and ignominious expulsion, even could we gain admittance to the abodes of bliss.

V. Mark the *subject of partial conviction*, the man who mistakes remorse for repentance, and a state of alarm for the unfailing pledge of salvation. Many such, terrified by Sinai's thunder, have called aloud for mercy; they have been frank in confession and earnest in inquiry. They have mourned, and watched, and been oppressed with dread. At length, however, they became tranquil. They were received with due form into a Christian society. But they soon settle down into heartless regularity; their conscience keeps pace with their profession, till at length they come to regard it as a sin to doubt respecting their good estate, and are offended at every faithful admonition. They can now pray without desire, and hear and read without attention. They can speculate with the mere worldling, hoard with the miser; can hold the poor from his desire, and cause the widow's heart to fail; yet dream by night and talk by day of "sovereign grace," "Divine influence," "the blood of our great High Priest," and

"the joys of immortality." But the gospel has had no practical and saving efficacy upon their hearts. Woe unto them who are thus at ease in Zion, who despise the warning contained in the text! Surely it is of the Lord's mercies that they are not consumed. Yet their judgment slumbereth not, nor does their condemnation linger.

Such are some of the more usual ways along which the children of men walk cheerfully down to death.

Is there a *better* way—a way which leadeth to *life*? My dear hearers, there is. Jesus the Son of God has opened it; he suffered, bled, and died, that he might secure it for us. He is the way of pardon, of peace, and of salvation. He is the way that leads to heaven and glory. Through him we have access with confidence to God, and are made partakers of that faith, the fruits of which are love, devotion, and holiness. And when our pilgrimage on earth is ended, we shall enter on a state of bliss without alloy, of happiness without end.

May the Holy Spirit awaken each one of you, my dear hearers, to a solemn consideration of this momentous subject, and prompt you to resolve, in the strength of Divine grace, that you will walk in the way of life. Are you now walking in this narrow way, or in the broad road that leadèth to destruction? Let me entreat you to make an immediate self-examination. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" "strive to enter in at the strait gate." The salvation of your soul is of all concerns the most important, and demands your earnest and supreme attention. Secure this, and all is secure; lose this, and all is lost, lost for ETERNITY!

LIVE TO DO GOOD.

WHAT, then, so far as this present life is concerned, should be the end and aim of every young man? I reply—*usefulness—usefulness.* To do good—to communicate the greatest amount of happiness in his power—to strive to resemble that Being who pours his rains and his dews upon all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. He loves a cheerful giver, and is himself a cheerful giver. On the desert where no man is found he sends his dews—though the arid sands alone drink them up. On the lofty mountain where human footsteps never trod, he hangs his mantle of light, and paints the icy summit with a pencil dipped in his warm sun-beams. In the ocean bed, so deep and so low that no human being has found even a grave there, has He walked, as he arranged the shells, and painted them all in heaven's own colors. In the heart of the lamb and in the heart of the insect has he poured the vial of joy and gladness, and made creatures happy who will never know or praise their Benefactor. In the wilderness has he been and planted the flower, and taught the songster to whistle his wild notes of joy. We might have had a sun lesser in magnitude, and shedding less light and glory, and we could have lived. We might have had no moon to walk the sky at night and pour the soft silver of her light over the earth, and we could have lived. But in all he does, God loves to set us an example, and to teach us not only that he loves a cheerful giver, but that he himself *is* a cheerful giver. It seems to add to his own happiness—or rather his happiness seems to consist in creating from generation to generation myriads of creatures over whom he may pour the expressions of his own benevolent heart; and that man who would enter into his joy—the highest joy in the whole creation—must imitate him, and live to do good.

If you were to seek for happiness for this life merely, having no regard to the future, there is no way so certain to accomplish this, as to live for the good of others. There is a gratification of the purest feelings of the heart unlike any thing that can arise from selfishness, which is a continual feast to the soul. Can any one doubt but that Howard, who went from prison to prison, and on whose arrival the prisoners would rush the length of their chains to fall at his feet, had pleasures as much more intense and delightful than those who live unto themselves, as his object was more noble and God-like than theirs? And then the conscience!—to lie down at night, feeling that you have contributed

in some degree, even if it be small, to make others happy, and this, not by accident or chance, but a daily occurrence—what a life must this be! How different from that of the young man who puts on the airs of some superior being, and feels that he must worship himself, and is to be caressed and admired by all, and that the great end of life is to see that his important self has the best of every thing. Do not say you have not the appliances with which to confer happiness. You have a father or a mother, a brother or a sister, whose heart you can gladden—not by some generous act now and then, but by ten thousand acts constantly recurring. You have an employer whom you can make happy by letting him see that you make his interests your own, and are faithful even in the smallest things. You have, or may have companions or friends whom you can make happy by forgetting yourself and making them happy in having such a friend. There is not a situation in which man can be placed, in which he cannot render himself a blessing by the tones of his voice, by the expression of his countenance, and by a thousand nameless ways. And he who shows that he has it in his heart to live not unto himself, will find that God will open new ways of doing good, and give him enlarged means of conferring happiness on others.

Cherish, then, as the noblest feeling which the human heart can have, a continued, unquenchable desire of being useful to mankind. Make this a principle of action on all occasions, and you have something that will give you indomitable energy. You need not seek distinction and honor—for it is impossible to withhold these from that man, so that he will not sooner or later have them, who lives to be useful to mankind. You need not think about the approbation of men; you will have that most certainly without seeking. I love to look at such a man as Matthew Hale—a man who never asked nor sought an honor, but whom both pursued and overtook. Bad and selfish as this world is, it will admire and honor those who make constant self-denial and labor to do good, with the hope of no reward but the secret consciousness of having done good, and of seeing others made happy. "I will not," says Hale, "concern myself to ask what others may think or say of me, so long as I keep myself exactly to the doing of my duty." Remember that any man lives in vain who does not make the world better for his living in it.

YOUNG MEN! in the morning of life gird on resolution as Hannibal did when his father led him up to the altar of his gods, and made him swear everlasting enmity to Rome. Put not off the dedication of yourself to the high purpose of living to be useful till you reach manhood. The muscles will become rigid before that time. The habits of life will be formed, and what you do not wish to do to-day, you will then hate to do.—*Rev. Dr. Todd.*

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 8, Vol. XXVI.] AUGUST, 1852. [Whole No. 308.

SERMON DLXXVIII.

BY REV. M. J. HICKOK,

ROCHESTER N. Y.

THE MISSION OF WOMAN UNDER THE GOSPEL.

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene.

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

"Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."—John xix. 25–27.

This is the record of one of the most instructive and thrilling incidents in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Unrelated and alone, it is the simple narrative of the dying solicitude of a son for a kind and dependent parent. But clothed with the drapery of those sublime events which environed the cross of Calvary, it glows with divine beauty and majesty; it becomes voiceful and authoritative for every child of Adam who hangs his immortal hopes on that cross.

This event occurred at this world's historical and moral meridian; at that fulness of time, of which prophets wrote and poets sung; that glorious advent of light and hope and salvation, for which kings legislated and good men prayed; but

> "Which kings and prophets waited for,
> And sought, but never found."

Four thousand dark and gloomy years of human history had rolled away. Generation after generation had swept across this narrow earth to a doubtful destiny. Revolution after revolution had changed the face of society. The whole world had sighed and cried under the burden of human misery, with no hope of relief! Every experiment of self-emancipation and improvement which long life, family attachment, political policy and

cultivated intellect could devise, had been thoroughly tried, and signally failed. The world groaned on, bleeding, rent, and wretched, till the Star of Bethlehem lighted it to the only source of help and salvation. Human influences had approached a grand crisis. Social institutions seemed to be worn out, and ready to vanish away. The old structure seemed tottering on its rotten foundations, and ready to crush all who trusted themselves to its protection. Men were every where dissatisfied with their religions, hailing every one that cried "Lo here" or "Lo there," looking in despair for some trustful guide in the thickening gloom.

The lines of ancient prophecy began to converge to a point. New expectation and promise were awakened. That point gathered brightness like the morning dawn, till a blazing sun arose, heralded by the day-star that directed the Eastern Magi to Jerusalem. That child was born who was to be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!"

The Saviour of the world had almost accomplished his wondrous mission. He was just about to offer that "one sacrifice," by which he hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

It was high noon in Judea. The holy city slept in the calm brightness of a tropical springtime. Its eager population had that day been convulsed with excitement since the early dawn, and their tired passions had lulled to a temporary repose. The morning sun had shone upon the wretched farce of our Saviour's trial. His reckless condemnation and cruel crucifixion quickly followed. For three dreadful hours already had the Son of God hung naked and shelterless upon a barbarous cross without the gate. Petrified with astonishment and grief, his few friends were gazing upon that strange, sad spectacle—a helpless, silent, suffering God! There he hangs before the sun, stretched on the fatal wood, writhing, gasping, fainting! They look to see him die! His work is done; his sufferings almost ended! "Will he speak again?" ask the terrified women at the foot of the cross. "Oh! will he not give us one parting look—one dying counsel—one more blessed communication from the very confines of that immortal state which he has brought to light?"

Yes! despairing disciples, once more he will speak; his very last instruction for a waiting world is yet to fall from his lips! Behold, once more his eyes are opening; they beam with dying brilliancy and compassion; they are fixed on his human mother and upon his dearest disciple. His quivering lips begin to move; hearken! "Woman, behold thy son! Disciple, behold thy mother!" Lo, the bright sun is suddenly eclipsed! Noon-day *is shrouded* in utter night! The heavens put on deep sackcloth! *Animated* nature is arrested in its meridian activity. A silent, *thoughtful, astonished world* pauses, w[illegible] of God expires!

After such a scene as this, who can doubt the propriety of assigning females a high rank in all our Christian regards? We are accustomed to attach a sacred value to the dying counsels of a friend. There is something solemn, almost divine, in the faint whisperings that echo back to us from the confines of another world. We bend our ears reverently to catch the latest accents that come up from the dim valley of death, as our friends lose themselves in its impenetrable darkness. Oh! what veneration and solemn authority should be attached to the dying words of the Son of God!

He had revealed great and precious truths, reaching up to the Throne of God, and on to an endless Future, and grasping the inconceivable destinies of Immortality! During his last Passover he had unbosomed himself to his disciples, and introduced them to some of the deep mysteries of godliness. He was with them alone, and during several swift, precious hours, he conversed with them as companions and brethren—instructing, warning, and encouraging them—girding their souls for their baptism of suffering. His omniscient eye swept down the stream of human events, and fastened upon all his disciples, and he uttered glorious promises for them all.

In Gethsemane he was with them also alone. Midnight had thrown its solemn pall over that slumbering Olivet; but *He* could not rest. His own crushing sorrows absorbed his attention, and he could only utter the significant warning, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." These thrilling instructions possess to every mind sublimer sacredness, in consequence of the touching *circumstances* under which they were uttered. But the words of our text fell from the lips of our Saviour at the *most* awful moment of his earthly career. The iniquities of a world hung on his soul; the agonies of crucifixion racked his body; the bitterness of death began to be tasted, and the shadow of its cold wings rested upon his bosom. A sympathizing cloud eclipsed the light of mid-day, and a darker hiding-place had concealed the radiance of his Father's smiles. In *that* hour of pain and dread and crushing sorrow, he turned a benignant smile upon his *mother*, and made provision for her temporal necessities! This was the crowning act of his natural life. The *last words* which Jesus Christ, as a man, ever addressed to mortals, were employed to *bless and honor a woman!* It was an act full of instruction and authority for all his disciples. It has set the seal of his religion for ever upon female elevation, protection, and pious regard.

Alas! that an apology should ever be necessary for treating half the race as rational creatures. But so it is. During nearly the whole of human history, the female sex has been placed in a sadly false position. Tyrannized over as slaves in all barbarous communities; subjected to humiliation, caprice, and all man-

less miseries, wherever polygamy has prevailed; degraded to an inferior rank, and compelled to minister to the sordid pleasures of *man*, during every phase of Oriental civilization; idolized as a toy, or clothed with the unreal and super-human qualities of romance by the chivalry of Europe; females have hardly *yet* attained their proper rank and influence as Christian companions and helpers in every good work.

The elevation and influence of woman is the exact measure of Christian civilization, and of human advancement. Whatever may serve to indicate her destiny, and furnish any stimulant to her improvement, should possess deep interest to every friend of God and lover of his race.

It will be the simple object of this discourse to discuss THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY UPON FEMALES, and THEIR RANK AND MISSION UNDER THE GOSPEL.

I. *Females owe their* ELEVATION *and* COMFORT *entirely to the Christian religion.* This fact, whenever it is apprehended, must present the claim of *gratitude* in all its breadth and distinctness.

What might have been the exact relation of the sexes to each other if the race had never sinned, it is not very easy to determine. The paradisiacal history of man is too meagre to furnish any certain data. Our great epic poet has drawn a delightful picture of that blessed experience; but he has evidently borrowed his tintings from the history of a *fallen* world. It is true, the first human pair wore the image of their glorious Maker:

——"Both
Not equal, as their sex not equal, seemed:
For contemplation *he*, and valor formed;
For softness *she*, and sweet attractive grace.
He for God only; she for God in him:
His fair large front, and eye sublime, declared
Absolute rule. . . . .
She, as a veil down to her slender waist,
Her unadorned, golden tresses wore
Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection; but required with gentle sway,
And by *her* yielded; by HIM best received."

There are probably no sexes among other orders of intelligent beings; and this marked earthly distinction seems not to be recognized in our immortal condition. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are givenin marriage." The "hundred and forty-four thousand" whom John saw standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion were "virgins;" but they had been redeemed from the earth, and are, in the record itself, of the masculine gender. In this apostate and trial world, woman has been placed in *subjection* to the other sex; of this there can be no doubt. The law is perfectly explicit. The words of the original curse were, "*Thy* desire shall be to thy husband, *he shall rule* over

thee." The apostle Paul, enforcing this law, gives four reasons why women should be in subjection:

1. "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man."

2. "Neither was the man created *for* the woman, but the woman for the man."

3. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve."

4. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

"*Three* of these reasons," it has been justly said, "were in full force before she sinned; therefore, what they were adduced to prove, namely, her *subjection*, must have been in force before the fall." The conclusion is inevitable. "The grounds and reasons of her subjection are drawn from the manner of her creation, and lie in the very *nature* of woman, as distinguished from man." The *fact* itself, sustained by both nature and revelation, has been uniform and conspicuous during the whole of human history. The authorized subjection of woman, like every other Divine arrangement, has been shockingly abused; and ages of gloom and sorrow, for the female race, have dragged through their weary cycles. Reckless violence soon succeeded the expulsion from Paradise. Cain, the first-born of our fallen parents, became a cold-blooded fratricide, and his descendants, for many ages, dissolute and lawless sinners. Polygamy was soon introduced, and female oppression became almost universal.

The writer of the Pentateuch has preserved a fragment of antediluvian poetry, which sheds melancholy light upon the manners of men and the condition of females in the fifth generation of our race:

"Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech,
Hearken unto my speech!
I have slain a man to my wounding,
And a young man to my hurt:
If Cain shall be avenged seven fold,
Truly Lamech seventy-and-seven fold."

This glimpse of social life in that age, incidentally given, reveals to us polygamy, female oppression, and social violence as common on the earth.

This universal oppression of woman was but partially relieved during the continuance of the patriarchial age and institutions. Religious feelings were all feeble; religious truth was choked by that powerful Oriental influence by which it was surrounded. The stamp of antediluvian wickedness, and the recklessness of those rebels who built the tower of Babel, seem to have impressed themselves upon Asiatic civilization in all ages. In all that protracted and unparalleled corruption woman has ever been the greatest sufferer. Even yet she has never attained to her proper dignity and privileges in any of those storied lands. Still the true religion has shed the only light that gilds the page

of her history through all the dark ages of the past. Its tendency has ever been to counteract that universal oppression and tyranny of which woman has been the victim.

Previous to the Incarnation, the general expectation of a Messiah exerted a silent but powerful influence upon the condition of females. Before man was driven from Paradise, that promise was uttered, around which have clustered the hopes of the world, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." That promise was ever the polar star to the ancient pilgrims, in all their wanderings upon a sin-cursed earth. The memory and tradition of Eden must have deepened the gloom which rested upon all human allotments. The violence and bloodshed which soon filled the earth was an awful demonstration of that wretched estate into which mankind had fallen. But a Deliverer was promised. Dimly indeed, but gratefully, that promise streamed across the heaving surges of sin and misery, like the steady harbor lights to the storm-tossed mariner! Every mother might hope to be the parent of the predicted Saviour, who should make the earth another Eden, and restore the lost bliss of Paradise! "*I have gotten* THE MAN *from the Lord,*" was the exclamation of parental anxiety, as the *first* mother clasped to her bosom the *first human child!* But alas! Cain became an outcast and a vagabond. The hopes which had clustered about him so brilliantly were all darkened and lost. But that great disappointment directed the expectation of the race to some *other* child yet to be born, as the Saviour of the world! Every household might anticipate that within its precincts, perchance, would be found the Redeemer of mankind! Such an expectation tended to dignify marriage, and shed a sacredness around the character of mothers which would soften the tyrannical spirit of man. It would elevate the tone of self-respect in woman, and inspire a sentiment akin to reverence in the stern and selfish breast of her acknowledged lord.

Such a tendency was very apparent in Jewish society. But that dispensation was only *preparatory*. It did not complete the emancipation of woman.

The Mosaic view of the relation between the sexes yet needed the finishing touch of the Great Teacher. That perfection the gospel supplies. Jesus Christ warmly espoused the cause of females. He asserted the Divine origin of wedlock, and taught that its severance could not lawfully be the work of man. The much-abused facility of *divorce*, which had subjected wives to the cruel caprices of their husbands, he restricted to *one* single cause. He mingled familiarly with the warm-hearted daughters of Israel, and by the purity of his life, the elevation of his doctrines, and the depth of his regard for them, won their confidence and sincere affection. This was a new spectacle on earth! The *Saviour* delayed his [illegible] meal, on the margin of Jacob's

well, to converse with a Samaritan woman, and direct her and her estranged countrymen to the only fountain of living waters. He received the particular attentions of a woman who had been a sinner and an outcast, at the house of a Pharisee in Capernaum, because he saw the tear of penitence in her eye, and experienced the work of faith at her hands. "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee," was her heavenly benediction. He healed the daughter of a heathen mother from the costs of Tyre and Sidon, because of her unshaken faith in him, though his mission was only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." He pitied and forgave a frail fair one at Jerusalem, when he had given her time for reflection, and doubtless felt assured that she would obey his benevolent injunction: "Go and sin no more." The traitor Judas was sternly rebuked for his murmuring against the gentle Mary, because, at the supper in Bethany, she had anointed the feet of the Saviour with most precious ointment. "She hath done what she could," was her excuse and her glory!

With views so exalted and affections so tender, it is not strange that the Saviour won the warm and gentle hearts of Jewish women, and bound to his cause such a band of faithful and high-minded females. Nowhere can be produced such female portraits as adorn the pages of the Bible. Such scenes of domestic loveliness, such pictures of womanly beauty, are not to be found in all the checkered history of the past. Jesus Christ opened a new and brilliant career to the female race.

The influence of Christianity, developing those emotions and exalting those spiritual endowments in which women especially *excel*, has wrought a decided change in the sentiments of the world. Under the gospel, woman is a "new creature," by her birthright. That birthright is glorious! It does not consist in that vague and distant *adoration* produced in Papal countries by the worship of the Virgin Mary, nor in that extravagant and romantic *gallantry* which was conspicuous in the early Teutonic races, and which gave birth to the institutions of chivalry in the middle ages. But it embraces the intelligent companionship of man, his sympathy and confidence in the female, as a Heaven-sent help-meet in every good and great undertaking. Christianity has begotten, in the purest and mightiest of men, a *want* of such companionship and sympathy; and it is the noblest mission of woman to supply that want!

But a chosen associate of man, a confidential adviser, a sympathizing friend you cannot find her, except under the benign influence of the Christian religion. Look over the world at this moment, my female friends; fix your eyes upon the whole sisterhood of your sex; and nowhere except among Christian nations, except where the gospel has been sincerely embraced, will you find woman arising to her proper dignity, and exerting

less miseries, wherever polygamy has prevailed; degraded to an inferior rank, and compelled to minister to the sordid pleasures of *man*, during every phase of Oriental civilization; idolized as a toy, or clothed with the unreal and super-human qualities of romance by the chivalry of Europe; females have hardly *yet* attained their proper rank and influence as Christian companions and helpers in every good work.

The elevation and influence of woman is the exact measure of Christian civilization, and of human advancement. Whatever may serve to indicate her destiny, and furnish any stimulant to her improvement, should possess deep interest to every friend of God and lover of his race.

It will be the simple object of this discourse to discuss THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY UPON FEMALES, and THEIR RANK AND MISSION UNDER THE GOSPEL.

I. *Females owe their* ELEVATION *and* COMFORT *entirely to the Christian religion.* This fact, whenever it is apprehended, must present the claim of *gratitude* in all its breadth and distinctness.

What might have been the exact relation of the sexes to each other if the race had never sinned, it is not very easy to determine. The paradisiacal history of man is too meagre to furnish any certain data. Our great epic poet has drawn a delightful picture of that blessed experience; but he has evidently borrowed his tintings from the history of a *fallen* world. It is true, the first human pair wore the image of their glorious Maker:

> ——"Both
> Not equal, as their sex not equal, seemed:
> For contemplation *he*, and valor formed;
> For softness *she*, and sweet attractive grace.
> He for God only; she for God in him:
> His fair large front, and eye sublime, declared
> Absolute rule. . . . .
> She, as a veil down to her slender waist,
> Her unadorned, golden tresses wore
> Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
> As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
> *Subjection;* but required with gentle sway,
> And by *her* yielded; by HIM best received."

There are probably no sexes among other orders of intelligent beings; and this marked earthly distinction seems not to be recognized in our immortal condition. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." The "hundred and forty-four thousand" whom John saw standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion were "virgins;" but they had been redeemed from the earth, and are, in the record itself, of the masculine gender. In this apostate and trial world, woman has been placed in *subjection* to the other sex; of this there can be no doubt. The law is perfectly explicit. The words of the original curse, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he

thee." The apostle Paul, enforcing this law, gives four reasons why women should be in subjection:

1. "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man."

2. "Neither was the man created *for* the woman, but the woman for the man."

3. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve."

4. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

"*Three* of these reasons," it has been justly said, "were in full force before she sinned; therefore, what they were adduced to prove, namely, her *subjection*, must have been in force before the fall." The conclusion is inevitable. "The grounds and reasons of her subjection are drawn from the manner of her creation, and lie in the very *nature* of woman, as distinguished from man." The *fact* itself, sustained by both nature and revelation, has been uniform and conspicuous during the whole of human history. The authorized subjection of woman, like every other Divine arrangement, has been shockingly abused; and ages of gloom and sorrow, for the female race, have dragged through their weary cycles. Reckless violence soon succeeded the expulsion from Paradise. Cain, the first-born of our fallen parents, became a cold-blooded fratricide, and his descendants, for many ages, dissolute and lawless sinners. Polygamy was soon introduced, and female oppression became almost universal.

The writer of the Pentateuch has preserved a fragment of antediluvian poetry, which sheds melancholy light upon the manners of men and the condition of females in the fifth generation of our race:

> "Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech,
> Hearken unto my speech!
> I have slain a man to my wounding,
> And a young man to my hurt:
> If Cain shall be avenged seven fold,
> Truly Lamech seventy-and-seven fold."

This glimpse of social life in that age, incidentally given, reveals to us polygamy, female oppression, and social violence as common on the earth.

This universal oppression of woman was but partially relieved during the continuance of the patriarchial age and institutions. Religious feelings were all feeble; religious truth was choked by that powerful Oriental influence by which it was surrounded. The stamp of antediluvian wickedness, and the recklessness of those rebels who built the tower of Babel, seem to have impressed themselves upon Asiatic civilization in all ages. In all protracted and unparalleled corruption woman has ever the greatest sufferer. Even yet she has never attained to privileges in any of those storied lands.
s shed the only light that gilds the page

less miseries, wherever polygamy has prevailed; degraded to an inferior rank, and compelled to minister to the sordid pleasures of *man*, during every phase of Oriental civilization; idolized as a toy, or clothed with the unreal and super-human qualities of romance by the chivalry of Europe; females have hardly *yet* attained their proper rank and influence as Christian companions and helpers in every good work.

The elevation and influence of woman is the exact measure of Christian civilization, and of human advancement. Whatever may serve to indicate her destiny, and furnish any stimulant to her improvement, should possess deep interest to every friend of God and lover of his race.

It will be the simple object of this discourse to discuss THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY UPON FEMALES, and THEIR RANK AND MISSION UNDER THE GOSPEL.

I. *Females owe their* ELEVATION *and* COMFORT *entirely to the Christian religion.* This fact, whenever it is apprehended, must present the claim of *gratitude* in all its breadth and distinctness.

What might have been the exact relation of the sexes to each other if the race had never sinned, it is not very easy to determine. The paradisiacal history of man is too meagre to furnish any certain data. Our great epic poet has drawn a delightful picture of that blessed experience; but he has evidently borrowed his tintings from the history of a *fallen* world. It is true, the first human pair wore the image of their glorious Maker:

> ——"Both
> Not equal, as their sex not equal, seemed:
> For contemplation *he*, and valor formed;
> For softness *she*, and sweet attractive grace.
> He for God only; she for God in him:
> His fair large front, and eye sublime, declared
> Absolute rule. . . . .
> She, as a veil down to her slender waist,
> Her unadorned, golden tresses wore
> Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
> As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
> *Subjection;* but required with gentle sway,
> And by *her* yielded; by HIM best received."

There are probably no sexes among other orders of intelligent beings; and this marked earthly distinction seems not to be recognized in our immortal condition. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage." The "hundred and forty-four thousand" whom John saw standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion were "virgins;" but they had been redeemed from the earth, and are, in the record itself, of the masculine gender. In this apostate and trial world, woman has been placed in *subjection* to the other sex; of this there can be no doubt. The law is perfectly explicit. The words of the original curse were, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he *shall rule* over

thee." The apostle Paul, enforcing this law, gives four reasons why women should be in subjection:

1. "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man."

2. "Neither was the man created *for* the woman, but the woman for the man."

3. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve."

4. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

"*Three* of these reasons," it has been justly said, "were in full force before she sinned; therefore, what they were adduced to prove, namely, her *subjection*, must have been in force before the fall." The conclusion is inevitable. "The grounds and reasons of her subjection are drawn from the manner of her creation, and lie in the very *nature* of woman, as distinguished from man." The *fact* itself, sustained by both nature and revelation, has been uniform and conspicuous during the whole of human history. The authorized subjection of woman, like every other Divine arrangement, has been shockingly abused; and ages of gloom and sorrow, for the female race, have dragged through their weary cycles. Reckless violence soon succeeded the expulsion from Paradise. Cain, the first-born of our fallen parents, became a cold-blooded fratricide, and his descendants, for many ages, dissolute and lawless sinners. Polygamy was soon introduced, and female oppression became almost universal.

The writer of the Pentateuch has preserved a fragment of antediluvian poetry, which sheds melancholy light upon the manners of men and the condition of females in the fifth generation of our race:

> "Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech,
> Hearken unto my speech!
> I have slain a man to my wounding,
> And a young man to my hurt:
> If Cain shall be avenged seven fold,
> Truly Lamech seventy-and-seven fold."

This glimpse of social life in that age, incidentally given, reveals to us polygamy, female oppression, and social violence as common on the earth.

This universal oppression of woman was but partially relieved during the continuance of the patriarchial age and institutions. Religious feelings were all feeble; religious truth was choked by that powerful Oriental influence by which it was surrounded. The stamp of antediluvian wickedness, and the recklessness of those rebels who built the tower of Babel, seem to have impressed themselves upon Asiatic civilization in all ages. In all that protracted and unparalleled corruption woman has ever been the greatest sufferer. Even yet she has never attained to her proper dignity and privileges in any of those storied lands. Still the true religion has shed the only light that gilds the page

less miseries, wherever polygamy has prevailed; degraded to an inferior rank, and compelled to minister to the sordid pleasures of *man*, during every phase of Oriental civilization; idolized as a toy, or clothed with the unreal and super-human qualities of romance by the chivalry of Europe; females have hardly *yet* attained their proper rank and influence as Christian companions and helpers in every good work.

The elevation and influence of woman is the exact measure of Christian civilization, and of human advancement. Whatever may serve to indicate her destiny, and furnish any stimulant to her improvement, should possess deep interest to every friend of God and lover of his race.

It will be the simple object of this discourse to discuss THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY UPON FEMALES, and THEIR RANK AND MISSION UNDER THE GOSPEL.

I. *Females owe their* ELEVATION *and* COMFORT *entirely to the Christian religion.* This fact, whenever it is apprehended, must present the claim of *gratitude* in all its breadth and distinctness.

What might have been the exact relation of the sexes to each other if the race had never sinned, it is not very easy to determine. The paradisiacal history of man is too meagre to furnish any certain data. Our great epic poet has drawn a delightful picture of that blessed experience; but he has evidently borrowed his tintings from the history of a *fallen* world. It is true, the first human pair wore the image of their glorious Maker:

> ——"Both
> Not equal, as their sex not equal, seemed:
> For contemplation *he*, and valor formed;
> For softness *she*, and sweet attractive grace.
> He for God only; she for God in him:
> His fair large front, and eye sublime, declared
> Absolute rule. . . . .
> She, as a veil down to her slender waist,
> Her unadorned, golden tresses wore
> Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
> As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
> *Subjection;* but required with gentle sway,
> And by *her* yielded; by HIM best received."

There are probably no sexes among other orders of intelligent beings; and this marked earthly distinction seems not to be recognized in our immortal condition. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are givenin marriage." The "hundred and forty-four thousand" whom John saw standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion were "virgins;" but they had been redeemed from the earth, and are, in the record itself, of the masculine gender. In this apostate and trial world, woman has been placed in *subjection* to the other sex; of this there can be no doubt. The law is perfectly explicit. The words of the original curse were, "*Thy* desire shall be to thy husband, and he *shall rule* over

thee." The apostle Paul, enforcing this law, gives four reasons why women should be in subjection:

1. "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man."

2. "Neither was the man created *for* the woman, but the woman for the man."

3. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve."

4. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

"*Three* of these reasons," it has been justly said, "were in full force before she sinned; therefore, what they were adduced to prove, namely, her *subjection*, must have been in force before the fall." The conclusion is inevitable. "The grounds and reasons of her subjection are drawn from the manner of her creation, and lie in the very *nature* of woman, as distinguished from man." The *fact* itself, sustained by both nature and revelation, has been uniform and conspicuous during the whole of human history. The authorized subjection of woman, like every other Divine arrangement, has been shockingly abused; and ages of gloom and sorrow, for the female race, have dragged through their weary cycles. Reckless violence soon succeeded the expulsion from Paradise. Cain, the first-born of our fallen parents, became a cold-blooded fratricide, and his descendants, for many ages, dissolute and lawless sinners. Polygamy was soon introduced, and female oppression became almost universal.

The writer of the Pentateuch has preserved a fragment of antediluvian poetry, which sheds melancholy light upon the manners of men and the condition of females in the fifth generation of our race:

> "Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech,
> Hearken unto my speech!
> I have slain a man to my wounding,
> And a young man to my hurt:
> If Cain shall be avenged seven fold,
> Truly Lamech seventy-and-seven fold."

This glimpse of social life in that age, incidentally given, reveals to us polygamy, female oppression, and social violence as common on the earth.

This universal oppression of woman was but partially relieved during the continuance of the patriarchial age and institutions. Religious feelings were all feeble; religious truth was choked by that powerful Oriental influence by which it was surrounded. The stamp of antediluvian wickedness, and the recklessness of those rebels who built the tower of Babel, seem to have impressed themselves upon Asiatic civilization in all ages. In all that protracted and unparalleled corruption woman has ever been the greatest sufferer. Even yet she has never attained to her proper dignity and privileges in any of those storied lands. Still the true religion has shed the only light that gilds the page

less miseries, wherever polygamy has prevailed; degraded to an inferior rank, and compelled to minister to the sordid pleasures of *man*, during every phase of Oriental civilization; idolized as a toy, or clothed with the unreal and super-human qualities of romance by the chivalry of Europe; females have hardly *yet* attained their proper rank and influence as Christian companions and helpers in every good work.

The elevation and influence of woman is the exact measure of Christian civilization, and of human advancement. Whatever may serve to indicate her destiny, and furnish any stimulant to her improvement, should possess deep interest to every friend of God and lover of his race.

It will be the simple object of this discourse to discuss THE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY UPON FEMALES, and THEIR RANK AND MISSION UNDER THE GOSPEL.

I. *Females owe their* ELEVATION *and* COMFORT *entirely to the Christian religion.* This fact, whenever it is apprehended, must present the claim of *gratitude* in all its breadth and distinctness.

What might have been the exact relation of the sexes to each other if the race had never sinned, it is not very easy to determine. The paradisiacal history of man is too meagre to furnish any certain data. Our great epic poet has drawn a delightful picture of that blessed experience; but he has evidently borrowed his tintings from the history of a *fallen* world. It is true, the first human pair wore the image of their glorious Maker:

> ——"Both
> Not equal, as their sex not equal, seemed:
> For contemplation *he*, and valor formed;
> For softness *she*, and sweet attractive grace.
> He for God only; she for God in him:
> His fair large front, and eye sublime, declared
> Absolute rule. . . . .
> She, as a veil down to her slender waist,
> Her unadorned, golden tresses wore
> Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
> As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
> *Subjection;* but required with gentle sway,
> And by *her* yielded; by HIM best received."

There are probably no sexes among other orders of intelligent beings; and this marked earthly distinction seems not to be recognized in our immortal condition. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are givenin marriage." The "hundred and forty-four thousand" whom John saw standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion were "virgins;" but they had been redeemed from the earth, and are, in the record itself, of the masculine gender. In this apostate and trial world, woman has been placed *in subjection* to the other sex; of this there can be no doubt. The *law is* perfectly explicit. The words of the original curse were, "*Thy* desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over

thee." The apostle Paul, enforcing this law, gives four reasons why women should be in subjection:

1. "For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man."

2. "Neither was the man created *for* the woman, but the woman for the man."

3. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve."

4. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

"*Three* of these reasons," it has been justly said, "were in full force before she sinned; therefore, what they were adduced to prove, namely, her *subjection*, must have been in force before the fall." The conclusion is inevitable. "The grounds and reasons of her subjection are drawn from the manner of her creation, and lie in the very *nature* of woman, as distinguished from man." The *fact* itself, sustained by both nature and revelation, has been uniform and conspicuous during the whole of human history. The authorized subjection of woman, like every other Divine arrangement, has been shockingly abused; and ages of gloom and sorrow, for the female race, have dragged through their weary cycles. Reckless violence soon succeeded the expulsion from Paradise. Cain, the first-born of our fallen parents, became a cold-blooded fratricide, and his descendants, for many ages, dissolute and lawless sinners. Polygamy was soon introduced, and female oppression became almost universal.

The writer of the Pentateuch has preserved a fragment of antediluvian poetry, which sheds melancholy light upon the manners of men and the condition of females in the fifth generation of our race:

> "Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech,
> Hearken unto my speech!
> I have slain a man to my wounding,
> And a young man to my hurt:
> If Cain shall be avenged seven fold,
> Truly Lamech seventy-and-seven fold."

This glimpse of social life in that age, incidentally given, reveals to us polygamy, female oppression, and social violence as common on the earth.

This universal oppression of woman was but partially relieved during the continuance of the patriarchial age and institutions. Religious feelings were all feeble; religious truth was choked by that powerful Oriental influence by which it was surrounded. The stamp of antediluvian wickedness, and the recklessness of those rebels who built the tower of Babel, seem to have impressed themselves upon Asiatic civilization in all ages. In all that protracted and unparalleled corruption woman has ever been the greatest sufferer. Even yet she has never attained to her proper dignity and privileges in any of those storied lands. *Still the true religion* has shed the only light that gilds the page

Place your high aims distinctly before you, and dwell upon the magnitude of your responsibility, and the sublimity of your mission. Covet to occupy your true place in a Christian community. In your self-culture and activities, ever have in view the solemn fact that you are to decide the moral character of the community, and stamp your own likeness in imperishable traces on countless hearts around you. Link yourselves wisely, but resolutely, to the welfare of your race, and prepare to leave along the path of your earthly pilgrimage good fruit, and fragrant flowers, and charming melody, to gladden the steps of your chafed and wearied brothers, who shall rise up and call you blessed.

SERMON DLXXIX.

BY REV. TALBOT W. CHAMBERS,

JUNIOR PASTOR OF THE REFORMED DUTCH COLLEGIATE CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE PIOUS.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom."—Prov. iii. 13.

It is common among men to judge of the weight of any sentiment by the character of him who utters it. If we apply this rule to our text, we shall see abundant reason for adopting it as a most certain and valuable truth. It was pronounced by Solomon, the man whose name has become another term for wisdom, and it is found in one of those writings which, being composed near the end of his life, are justly considered as containing the last product of his faculties ripened and disciplined by a course of long and varied experience. But more than this: the wise man in this book gives not only the matured result of his own elaborate reflection, but that conclusion to which he was led by the inspiration of the only wise God.

The sentiment of the text, however, claims our careful attention, as well on account of its nature as of its author. It professes to answer one of the most interesting and important inquiries man can make, *how he shall secure his happiness;* an inquiry which every human being is continually engaged in making. David tells us that in his day, the cry of the multitude was, "Who will show us any good?" and in the great state paper of our own country we find the pursuit of happiness mentioned along with life and liberty as one of the dearest rights and possessions

of man. From the child eagerly grasping after the first toy which meets his eye, to the old man trembling on the verge of the grave, every individual is seeking the great boon, happiness. And the ways in which it is sought are almost as various as the parties engaged in the pursuit. Some, differing but little from the brute beasts, find their paradise in sensual gratifications. Miserable beings are they indeed, unworthy to live, and alas! unfit to die. Others, elevating their views somewhat, make the supreme good to consist in the possession of wealth, or fame, or power. A nobler class labor for it in the pursuits of literature, or science, or the fine arts. A wiser class (we speak, of course, comparatively) place their enjoyment in the cultivation of the social and domestic affections, esteeming all beyond the narrow circle of home and kindred and friends a barren waste, as in truth it too often is.

For each of these views, when regarded in their most favorable light, much may be said. Yet on the whole the testimony of experience is, that they are not satisfactory. Where one has gained his end, hundreds have been miserably disappointed; and the successful aspirant has generally found that the fruit which dazzled his eye, and which he so eagerly grasped, has turned to ashes in his hand. In the midst of this scene of baffled expectation and blasted hope, how cheering is it to hear an authoritative voice pronouncing the words of the text. You will observe it does not say, Happy *will be*, but "Happy *is* the man that findeth wisdom," or piety, which are used as convertible terms in the writings of Solomon. It is a great mistake to suppose that the pious man is only *to be* blest; he is blest already. There is indeed an endless and glorious reversion before him hereafter; but even here, amid the darkening shadows of this vale of tears, he has the earnest of what is to come; he enjoys a happiness which is real, pure, and satisfying.

Some of the main causes or elements of this happiness it is our purpose now to set forth.

I. *Peace of conscience.*

The first one we mention is a peaceful conscience; and this one naturally assumes this priority, because it is first both in time and in importance. There can be no solid comfort while a man is ill at ease respecting his condition before God. Whatever other earthly blessings may crown his lot, this drawback is the one mysterious drop which converts the whole contents of his cup into gall. He is like the wretched Haman, who had all he could desire, and yet the whole availed him nothing while Mordecai sat at the king's gate. The possession of the entire world, with all its honors and pleasures, would be but a mockery to him who feels the lash of an accusing conscience. While on the other hand, to him who is at peace with himself, there is a sweet and ample solace under whatever external evils may befall him.

To him, as has well been said, may be justly applied the vain boast of Horace respecting his just man—that the rage of the multitude, the threatenings of tyrants, the commotions of the elements, nay, the fall of the world itself, could not dismay him. (*Impavidum ferient ruinæ.*) With an approving conscience, what has he to fear? His tranquillity, as it does not arise out of outward things, so it cannot be affected by their vicissitudes.

This peace, however, is not to be confounded with another state of mind nearly resembling it, but as different, in reality, as possible. There is a sense of security in regard to spiritual and eternal things which springs not from religion, but from the want of it. It has no solid foundation in reason or Scripture, and is destined sooner or later to a fearful overthrow. It results either from infidel or deistical principles, such as that there is no God, or that he will not visit for the conduct of his creatures; or from the power of sinful appetites and passions which shut out all serious thoughts from even momentary consideration; or from false ideas of the mercy of God, such as the persuasion that notwithstanding what he has said, still he will clear the guilty; or again, from men's most erroneous conceptions of their own character, as being by their self-righteousness, or by their antinomian faith, freed from any danger of incurring the Divine wrath. Now, the security thus produced is the consequence of ignorance and insensibility. It is that of a man who walks without fear on the verge of a tremendous precipice, because he is blind. It is the natural state of a darkened, hardened, or seared conscience.

How different the peace of the children of God! It is intelligent, and well-grounded, and Scriptural. It admits the existence of sin and punishment, of death and of hell. Truly pious men generally have profounder impressions of these realities than any others. They bow in humble acknowledgment of the Divine justice, feeling that their lives and their all are due to its violated claims. But at the same time they look with faith to an all-sufficient Redeemer; and in the merits of his obedience and death they see ample reason for confidence and hope. Having been led to accept from the heart his mediation and atonement, they have assured peace. Why should they not? What is there to disturb the tranquillity? There are, indeed, sin and guilt which cry with loud voices for punishment. But this punishment has been inflicted to the last iota, and now the law is satisfied; justice is satisfied; God is satisfied; their own sense of right is satisfied. What, then, remains to harass the conscience of the sincere believer? He has gone to the bottom of the difficulty between him and his Maker, and he has bridged the chasm so effectually, that it is even stronger than it was before. The lapse of time cannot develop any new facts, or make any stronger impressions than he has already had. Let sin assume its blackest hues, let his unworthiness be revealed in the

most startling form, still neither can surpass the merits of Christ's sacrifice, or the free grace of Him who gave his only-begotten Son, the just for the unjust. Hence, so long as he clings to the cross, and places his simple and exclusive trust in its exalted victim, the penitent sinner has in his conscience a peace which the world cannot give or take away. Happy, therefore, is the man that findeth this wisdom.

II. *The Union of Inclination and Duty.*

One of the most common sources of uneasiness and apprehension among men is the opposition between their views of what is right and their views of what is desirable. There is a course which they know very well they ought to shun, but it is exceedingly agreeable; on the other hand, there is a course which they ought closely to follow, but alas! it is altogether repulsive. And whichever of these ways they take, they are unhappy. If they take the wrong way, the way pleasing to flesh and blood, they have all the time certain twinges of remorse, and even in the midst of the pleasures of sin are painfully conscious that a day of reckoning will come. If, however, they take the right way, and aim to live godly in the world, it is the hardest of all tasks. They have no kind of pleasure in it. Every step of the road is irksome. Nothing but stress of conscience, a stern sense of duty, keeps them from throwing up at once the disagreeable undertaking.

Now, there are in this respect three classes of impenitent persons. One, the smallest, pursues, or strives to pursue, the painful road of rectitude, toiling evermore in the vain struggle against nature. A second and larger class follows the downward path, and gives full swing to corrupt inclinations, although often sadly disturbed by the remonstrances of the inward monitor. The third, and by far the largest class, alternates between the two courses, never giving any decided or permanent predominance to either. But all alike are unhappy. When they do evil, of course they find the way of transgressors is hard; and when they try to do what is good or right, they are disappointed of the pleasure to which they have earned a title. Madame de Sévigné has expressed this with her usual *naïveté*: "I wish very much I could be religious. I belong, at present, neither to God nor the devil; and I find this condition very uncomfortable, though, between you and me, the most natural in the world."

Now, the pious have this characteristic, that they not only, as a general thing, pursue the path of rectitude, but *delight in it* as being not merely their duty, but their choice. Retirement, prayer, study of the Sacred Scriptures, religious conversation, self-denial, are pleasant to them. They have a new spiritual relish, which makes religious duties as attractive to them as books are to a scholar, as parade-day is to a soldier, or as gay amusements are to the children of fashion. Thus a pious

young lady once, on being asked if she considered the worldly engagements and pleasures which she had renounced as being criminal, replied, that really there was no occasion for her to discuss that point, for she had lost all taste for such enjoyments, and whether innocent or not, would not care to engage in them.

And so it is with all genuine believers. I do not say, indeed, that they are never troubled with unlawful desires, or conflicts between impulse and principle; for even the best of Christians are in this world only imperfectly sanctified, and while old Adam lives, he will make himself felt. But, as a general thing, the very things which it is a pious man's duty to do, he loves; and those which it is his duty to avoid, he abhors. And thus the path which to so many seems girt with thorns, is to him strewn with flowers. For, happy is the man that findeth wisdom.

III. *Communion with God.*

The Sacred Scriptures often speak of a fellowship which is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; of an intimate communion which believers have with their covenant God. This subject is eminently of an experimental nature, and one which cannot be made perfectly plain to those who have no heart for spiritual things. Yet is it not mysterious—much less inconceivable or impossible. As mind communes with mind and heart with heart on earth, so may minds and hearts here commune with the Infinite Mind on high. The only difficulty in the way is sin: remove this, and it rests with God alone to say whether or not his creatures below may have the intercourse with him which is enjoyed by the holy beings around his throne. This point he has graciously settled in his own Word. Said Jesus, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Again, "If any man hear my voice, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." And so in numerous passages of the Old Testament, where God is described as the refuge, the resting-place, the only sufficient portion of believers.

Now it is true this communion is not susceptible of rigid analysis; just as you cannot set down in logical formulas the intercourse of two earthly friends, or the mutual affection of husband and wife. Yet it has an existence just as really and as certainly in one case as in the other. The pious man withdraws from outward and worldly things, and seeks intercourse with his God. He ponders over the revealed page, or he pours out his heart in prayer, or he gives wings to his soul in devout meditation on some truth of the gospel. As he proceeds, the fire burns; and ofttimes in the rapt exercise he loses consciousness of place and time. Whether the season be long or short, he has communed with his God. His own heart has gone out to God in various

emotions and exercises, and God has graciously come down to him. He is as sure that God has been dealing with his soul as was Abraham when he heard the promises, or as Samuel when repeatedly awoke by the voice in the temple. There is nothing fantastic or fanatical in this. Men may call it the dream of a disordered imagination; but it is, in truth, the reality of a sanctified heart, authorized by the Lord's own words, and confirmed by the testimony of his people in all ages. This is what David meant when he said, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

And who shall tell the joy and peace of the communion thus gotten? It is pure, heavenly, divine. Independent of all earthly circumstances, it is a possession incorruptible and undefiled. The believer may lose all external things, he may be left as destitute as when he first came into the world; but while God continues to be, his chief source of happiness continues unimpaired. The language of his soul is that of Asaph thousands of years since: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee." And therefore, happy, yes, happy is the man that findeth wisdom.

IV. *Confidence in Providence.*

One of the chief evils of this world is its uncertainty. Its fashion is continually passing away. Houses and lands, fame and honor, friends and relatives—whatever we love or prize, and whether it be intrinsically valuable or not—all are as fleeting as a flower, a bubble, a vapor:

> "Like snow-flakes on a river,
> One moment white, then gone for ever."

Ages upon ages ago grim experience taught the wise to say, "Call no man happy till he dies." The brightest morning often ends in the very blackness of darkness. The sources of pleasure are turned into sources of misery; and the identical beings or objects which prompted hope, become the instruments of unhappiness. Nor can human wisdom guard against these contingencies. The precautions which answer effectually in one case, are utterly fruitless in another. Sometimes, indeed, the very means used to preclude danger only bring it on more certainly.

Now, amid all these proverbial vicissitudes of this world, there is only one man who can walk with a charmed life, i. e., the wise or pious man. Believing as he does in a Providence which is not blind, but intelligent; not general only, but also particular; not fatalistic on the one hand nor capricious on the other, but sovereign, wise, holy and good; such a man can afford to walk on life's pathway with a light heart and a buoyant step. He knows not, nor does he want to know, what may befall him; but he is sure nothing shall happen to him which is not sent by a

divine hand, which is not wisely and kindly intended, and which shall not, in the end, minister to his eternal blessedness. It matters not what may be before his mind—his business, his property, his reputation, his family or his friends; all are alike under the covenant care of an all-seeing eye, and an all-mighty arm. Let cares like a wild deluge come, and storms of sorrow fall, the Lord of hosts is with him; the God of Jacob is his refuge. Let the heathen rage, and the earth melt, and the foundations be destroyed, he looks serenely up to that Being who rides upon the wings of the wind, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He knows that all things are in the hand of God. The fire and the flood are but ministers to do his pleasure. The bad passions of men and of devils are under his control, and He can say to either: "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther." The wrath of man he makes to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains.

How happy is the man who has found this wisdom; who can and does thus habitually regard God! How free from care and anxiety his bosom! How peaceful his days, how tranquil his nights! In prosperity he is not elated; in adversity he is not disheartened; but in either calmly rests on the Divine promise as a confiding child on its mother's bosom. And therefore, happy, thrice happy, is the man that findeth wisdom.

V. *The Hope of Heaven.*

As we are concerned with the present and not the future happiness of the believer, I speak not of heaven itself, but of *the hope* of that blessed inheritance—two things which, however closely connected, are yet perfectly distinct in themselves. While, then, the pious man has in this life a number of sources of happiness, pure and solid and satisfying, he has superadded to them all the prospect of an immense and eternal weight of glory in the future life. And this prospect itself is one of the greatest joys conceivable.

> "Heaven in reversion, like the sun, as yet
> Beneath the horizon, cheers us in this world;
> It sheds on souls susceptible of light
> The glorious dawn of our eternal day." YOUNG, VIII. 1055.

Hope is often spoken of as the one great blessing of man which survived the ruins of the fall. It is the grand spring of enterprise, the chief incitement to active effort, the main support in misfortune; nor is there any lower deep of distress for him in whose breast hope has expired. He who possesses it is transported from the scene around him to another, fairer and more blissful; and, tasting by anticipation its delights, is raised far beyond his existing circumstances, whether of joy or of sorrow. Prose and poetry have both been tasked to the utmost in setting forth its animating, encouraging, and consolatory influence.

But if this be its effect when it is only an illusion of fancy, or when, at best, its objects are confined to the narrow bounds of space and time, what must be its power when it takes hold of eternal life, and brings near the glories of the world to come! Borne aloft upon angels' wings, the soul reaches the very secret of God's presence, and revels there in the contemplation of those joys which are at His right hand, and those pleasures which are for evermore. Nor is its upward flight arrested by any consciousness of uncertainty, or any fear of disappointment. These are left for the children of the world, whose brilliant expectations, indeed, often dazzle only to delude and to destroy. The hope of the Christian, on the contrary, stands like an anchor of the soul, and never makes ashamed. It is based upon the all-sufficient righteousness of Christ; it is inspired by the Holy Spirit of truth and grace, and it is confirmed by every day's progress in the service and knowledge of God. The earnest of its glorious objects is already experienced in this world, the believer's present exercises being "a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life." Having, then, in addition to other joys of the most substantial character, a hope so exalted in its nature, and so immovable in its foundation, there is nothing wanting to the completion of the Christian's blessed lot. If any thing be true, it is this: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom."

There is, however, an objection sometimes offered to this statement. "If this be so," it is said, "then Christians ought to be distinguished by a uniform sense of contentment and peace; they should be the happiest of mortals: whereas frequently the reverse of this is the case." The objection is fair, and we purpose to answer it fairly. First, then, all professed Christians are not such in reality; and, of course, it is no wonder that nominal believers should have only nominal joy. Man may make a wax flower exactly resembling the production of Nature, but only a simpleton would expect from it the fragrance of God's own handiwork. But, secondly, many real children of God are constitutionally of a gloomy or desponding temperament. This is a part of their physical nature, and will cleave to them until the soul drops its earthly clogs, and soars on high. While, therefore, they may have grace in lively exercise, they will not have the evidence of grace; while they may have abundant reason to rejoice and be glad, they will rather be a prey to anxious forebodings. But as piety does not pretend to change the outward man, these sporadic cases are no objection to the general truth we have laid down. But, thirdly, a great many, of whom we may hope that the root of the matter is in them, feel and show but little of the happiness we have spoken of, because of their weak faith and careless living. God, of course, will not smile upon his disobedient children. If they set their affections upon any

other than Him, they must needs lose the light of his countenance: just as, if we hold up a dark body between us and the sun, we cannot but be in the shade. So if faith languishes, joy will languish in like measure. The most beautiful landscape conveys no pleasure to the man who does not see it. The largest promises mean nothing to him who does not know or believe that he has some title to them. And hence the disquietude of many of whom it would be harsh to say they had no interest in Christ. Whatever real happiness they have, is because they have a spark of grace; whatever they lack, is because they have *only* a spark.

I submit, then, the objection is fully met. Apart from these cases, it is, it has been, it will be ever true: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom." Never has a really godly person, of an ordinarily cheerful temperament, walked close with God without being happy. Ransack the history of the world, and you will find no such case. Catechise every soul now living in Christendom, and you will find no such case.

My impenitent hearer, you want happiness, and you know where to obtain it. Let me now earnestly entreat you to seek it at once. It is not true that all religion's blessings lie beyond the grave. Oh! no; they are here; they lie around you; they await your extended arm. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Like the man in the parable then, sell all that you have and buy the field which has this pearl of great price. Then life will flow on in pure and tranquil pleasures; mercies will acquire a sweeter relish; afflictions will lose half their bitterness; death will be divested of its terrors; the present will be the seed-time of grace, the future, the harvest of glory; and in short, you will "enjoy God in every thing, and every thing in God."

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 9, Vol. XXVI] SEPTEMBER, 1852. [Whole No. 309.

SERMON DLXXX.

BY REV. JONATHAN BRACE,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MILFORD, CONN.

THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIAN PIETY.

"Holding forth the word of life."—Philippians ii. 16.

This passage has reference to *Christians*. They are represented "as shining like lights in the world," and are exhorted to "hold forth the word of life." There may be an allusion here to *light-houses*. Christians are designed to be, to those who are on the rough treacherous sea of life, what light-houses are to mariners: to warn them off from the rocks of temptation and sin, to keep them from making wreck of their souls, and to guide them to the desired haven. "Holding forth the word of life." The subject naturally divides itself into three branches: I. *The life here spoken of;* II. *The propriety of the phrase "word of life," as applied to the gospel; and* III. *The mode in which this life is to be held forth by Christians.*

I. *The life here spoken of.* It is not that life which scarce deserves the name, *animal* life, *temporal* life; a life limited to but a few days, and a life full of trouble. The gospel was not given to remove all evils incident to the present state, or to confer an immortality of existence here upon the earth. It contemplates something higher and nobler—the life of the *soul*. The life then here meant, is *spiritual life*. Men are naturally *dead*, "dead in trespasses and sins." When our first parents plucked the forbidden fruit, they not only died, but were the occasion of death in all their posterity. "In Adam all die." By his fall, depravity has pervaded the human race. All are born spiritually dead, and must be born again; all are born spiritually dead, and to be

saved must be made spiritually alive. Spiritual life implies a conviction of the fact of spiritual death—the creation of a new heart and the renewing of a right spirit; and the existence of this life is manifested by a delight in God and the things of God.

The life also of the text is a life of *perfect blessedness.* Spiritual life being the life of the soul, it goes along with the soul when the body is dropped; and such is the nature of this life, that in the presence of the Lord in heaven its possessor has full enjoyment. The future state of him who is endued with spiritual life in this world is one of pure and unmingled happiness. He there ceases from the toil, fatigue and trouble of his earthly pilgrimage; is made free from the bondage of sin; is no more tempted, terrified, or deceived; is united to the spirits of the just, to angels, to Jesus and to God, and has an eternal weight of glory. This life is likewise a life of *endless advancement.* The faculties of the soul, spiritually alive, are invigorated and exalted by constant renewal. They expand and receive fresh energy as ages roll away, and hence are enabled to comprehend more and more of the Divine character and government, and to penetrate farther and farther into the unfathomable depths of redeeming love! Such, briefly, is the life here spoken of: "Holding forth the word of life." We pass,

II. *To the propriety of this phrase, "word of life," as applied to the* GOSPEL.

1. We observe that there is a marked propriety in it, because *the gospel publishes the way in which this life may be obtained.* The gospel is the only source from which information on this subject is derived. Previous to its promulgation, "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." All mankind alienated from a life superior to rational, the life of God, and lying under the power of moral death, none could say how they might "pass from death unto life." It remained for Christ to declare the way *in his gospel.* "I am come," said he, "a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. I am come that they might have *life*, and that they might have it more abundantly." He proclaimed the mode in which it might be obtained, and inspired apostles to record this mode, and transmit it to us. He applied the key to this great mystery, hidden from ages and generations, unlocked it and made it plain. He sheathed the flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life, and opened the medium of access to its quickening fruits. Now all is level to the humble capacity of a child. He who runs may read the gospel, and, though dead unto divine things, be made alive unto God, through Jesus Christ. From these pages we learn, that when Jehovah might have poured out the vial of incensed wrath upon our guilty race, opened the armory of heaven

and planted its artillery against us, that, amazing grace! he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotton Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." This life flows to us from the wounded side of the holy Sufferer. He who penitently embraces him who hung on Calvary, has by this union a current of immortal life rolled in upon his soul. "He who hath the Son, hath life." This the gospel tells us; this blessed truth it discloses, and hence is called "*the word of life.*" Well may we exclaim with Simon Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

2. Again: It is the gospel which *unfolds the excellency of this life.* It not only reveals to us the life, but sets before us its value. It shows us that it is a remedy for *death;* that he who has it *not* is dead while he liveth, and must soon die to all hope and happiness for ever; while he who *possesses* it "is made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity." It meets the inquirer, "Who can show me any good?" and shows him that what he wants as a fallen, yet immortal creature, is this life of the soul. The gospel embosoms what the necessities of man demand. Here is pardon for guilt, sanctification for corruption, justification for condemnation; here is found peace of conscience, defense from danger, and the joys of the Holy Ghost. All this is wrapped up in the word of life; all this the gospel unfolds to make its value appreciated, and to urge the wisdom of cordially receiving it.

3. Again: The gospel is the word of life, not only because it publishes the mode in which this life may be obtained, and exhibits its inestimable excellence, but because *it actually produces life.* There is no life *without* it, and there is life *with* it. "My words," says the Saviour, "they are spirit, and they are life." This is the grand peculiarity of the gospel: it makes itself *felt. Other* narratives, other treatises on morals, can only come *before* the mind; they have not power so to act upon the mind as to compel assent. Not so the gospel: there goes along with *it* a divine influence, which when put forth is irresistible. This influence is called "the spirit of Christ," as the word is called "the word of Christ;" and when the two are combined, as Christ is willing they should be, and often causes them to be, then is the gospel "quick and powerful," and "like the fire and like the hammer, it breaketh the heart of rock in pieces;" then is it "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." As we have said, there is no life without the gospel. Go where you will, and, so you find not the *gospel* there, you find not *life* there. One dreary, uniform death broods over the entire region. Its inhabitants are but as corpses, so far as spiritual life is concerned. 'How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

Faith cometh by hearing, and life cometh by faith. And it is also true, as has been said, that where is the gospel, there is life. No where is it prayerfully read, or faithfully preached, for any considerable time, without its quickening effects are made visible. Minds are inclined to thought, to Christ, to heaven; and of some there it may be said, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Emphatically, therefore, is the word of life a proper representation of the gospel.

4. I only add, further, that it likewise *supports life*. It is to the spiritual principle what the soil, the sun, and the shower are to the plant. It is the divinely prepared nutriment for the soul; it is to it what food is to the body: it is the pabulum of life. The living soul has an appetite, and without it is fed by the word, there is great debility, if not the extinguishment of vitality. Hence the exhortation of the apostle: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby;" as also the striking remark of Christ: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." One principal reason why the cause of piety declined in the fourth century, after it had become so generally diffused, was, that this support of the word was taken away. The preacher's voice could not always sound, and there was then no *printed* page. This cut the sinews of strength. And the cause why religion now languishes in any heart is, because that heart does not sufficiently draw from the gospel stores. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." The thriving soul has the wholesome diet of the word, and by vigor thus communicated, approaches the stature and the strength of a perfect man in Christ. "Vigor of divine life cannot be sustained, without an earnest and constant use of the Word of God. The pale and sickly growth of a plant in a dark cellar is an apt similitude of the piety of those who make little use of the word of life. The intenser beams of the Sun of Righteousness, steadily playing upon the soul, are indispensable to give the soul the flush and vigor of health." So peculiarly appropriate is the title "word of life" to the gospel, it reveals life, produces it, exalts it, and sustains it. It is enlightening, quickening, and imperishable; and when it shall be every where known and studied and believed, and "the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth," this earth, so long the valley of death, and the charnel-house of unnumbered abominations, shall be like to Paradise above. We come,

III. *To the mode in which this life should be held forth by Christians.* "Holding forth the word of life."

1. They should hold it forth *by a public avowal of their belief of it, and their purpose to obey it.*

This is an unbelieving world. Christ "came unto his own, and

his own received him not." "He is despised and rejected of men." His gospel, too, finds many who deny the divinity of its origin, and multitudes more who view its contents as of trifling importance. It devolves then upon those who heartily believe the gospel, who have felt its convicting and converting power upon their souls, to *declare* this their belief. Never should they when they hear it spoken lightly of, never should they when thrown into the society of the doubting or skeptical, fail to speak of their high appreciation of it, and that they bow in reverence to its authority. This, however, is not *all*. As it is the will of Christ that his people should live not solitarily, but in visible association, as he has commanded them openly to join themselves to him, every sincere believer of the gospel is solemnly bound to connect himself with those of kindred sentiments and feelings, and to enter into covenant with Christ. According to inspiration and established usage, he is to do this *publicly*. The broken body and shed blood of the Redeemer depict in rays of light his mediatorial character on which salvation is founded; and when "we eat of that bread and drink of that cup," we are expressly told that we thereby "show forth the Lord's death." It is the duty of believers thus to show it forth. "Do this," says Christ, "in remembrance of me." He well knew what effect his table, covered with the symbols of his suffering love, and his children seated around it, would have upon an unbelieving world; he knew that it was calculated to produce thought, and to open the sluices of penitence, and to multiply conquests to the truth. Hence the plain command to his friends to set that table, and to place themselves around it, and, from that heavenly place in Christ Jesus, to *hold forth* his word of life. The believer there says: "I acknowledge that I possess that guilt and depravity which rendered a Divine interference in my behalf necessary; I believe that such a work was undertaken and finished by the great Redeemer; I embrace his gospel and himself; and here, sitting at his table, with the memorials of his affection and compassion in my hands and at my lips, I proclaim him to be the all-sufficient and only Saviour of mankind!" Who does not see that such a confession before men is a confession that they must understand and feel; and that when Christians thus come together, and thus explictly and harmoniously declare their sentiments, that there goes from them a power to arrest attention and promote inquiry, and an influence most favorable to righteousness? Hence the stress laid upon the duty of professing religion by Jesus Christ, and the sin of those who shrink back from discharging this duty. The word of life is to be held forth by individuals *in their collective capacity as a church*. It is thus that their light, blending with the light of others, emits a splendor that is seen, a splendor which is far pervading, and which at
the star of Bethlehem, to the person of the Saviour!

2. Again: Christians are to hold forth the word of life *by their consistent, exemplary deportment.* As He who hath called them is holy, called them to resemble himself, called them to be his representatives on the earth, while he is gone to prepare a place for them in heaven; so they are to be holy in all manner of conversation. If there is any thing just, pure, lovely, and of good report, the gospel enjoins upon us to practise it; and if there is any thing sinful, base, and dishonorable, the gospel enjoins upon us to avoid it. Those then who profess to believe the gospel and to make it "the man of their counsel and the guide of their lives," are expected, and properly expected, to be bright examples of the power of godliness. And when they *are* so—when there is a correspondence between their principles and their lives, when their profession is followed by legitimate fruits, then are the mouths of the wicked stopped, and the honor of God advanced upon the earth. Believers are called "the Lord's *witnesses;*" they witness, by their profession and conduct, to the excellence of his word. When this word meets the eyes, or is proclaimed in the hearing of the impenitent, it is designed that the force of it upon their minds and hearts should be augmented by the daily exemplary walk of Christians. If this walk is *not* exemplary, the contradiction between the word and the witness makes the word of none effect. On the contrary, if the arrows of truth are pointed and winged by the silent eloquence of the holy lives of the people of God, they reach the conscience and bring the rebel to submission. True religion is indeed experimental, and in this respect, as a matter between us and our Maker, is concealed from public view. The spark of grace is not kindled in the heart by observation. The soft gales of the Spirit, which subdue and regenerate, go, like the wind, where they please. But when they have once *savingly visited a soul,* they sanctify what is social, kind and tender in that soul, and produce *appropriate results* in the behavior of their subject. Then does he commune with Christ; then is the breath of prayer sweet; then is the gospel precious; then does he pant after assimilation to the Divine image; and then his affections, instead of being chained to earth, rise above earth, and fasten upon the skies. This cannot be, and be unnoticeable. A walk so different from the worldling, the avaricious, the ambitious, will be referred to a difference of principle, whose foundation is *the word of life,* and thus will he "*adorn the doctrine of God* his Saviour." This is preaching by *action,* the most *effective* of preaching.

> "*Thus* shall we *best* proclaim abroad
> The honors of our Saviour God;
> When his salvation *reigns within,*
> And *grace subdues the power of sin.*"

Here is "the living epistle," and it will be read—it cannot

fail of being read; and when the world, as they look out upon the professed disciples of Christ, see the light and savor of their holiness so continually diffused—see the beauties of holiness beaming from their whole deportment, "they will be constrained, by what they thus behold, to glorify God in the day of visitation." In this way, therefore, are Christians to "hold forth the word of life," by showing in their conduct what the word, believed and obeyed, can do; how it can renew, and spiritualize, and elevate, and inform the whole man, with the spirit of the Agent who inspired it.

3. Again: Christians are to hold forth the word of life *by making direct efforts for the conversion of sinners.* The first inquiry of the new-born soul is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the reply is, Employ your personal energies in renovating this ruined world. As *you* have been called from darkness to light, endeavor thus to call others; as *you* have been introduced to Jesus, introduce other souls to him. As angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, contribute to their joy. As "he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," be faithful to that circle of impenitent acquaintances with which you are surrounded, and speak to them in behalf of Christ. "Hold forth the word" to your darling child, your intimate friend, and your thoughtless neighbor, by kindly conversing with them with reference to their spiritual state and prospects. Exhibit their guilt and danger; break up the foundations of every self-righteous system of hope; bring the objects of the future world near; unfold the necessity and value of the atoning blood of Christ, and induce them to embrace him as their Saviour. Thus Andrew brought Peter. "We have found," said he, "the Messias." Thus the woman of Samaria brought her fellow-citizens: "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" And thus thousands, by lending their individual and personal influence to bring men to repentance, have, by the Divine blessing on their labors, been a sweet savor of Christ in their salvation.

Christians are not released from the obligation to hold forth the word of life in this way. The institution of the gospel ministry does not absolve them. "He that *heareth*" is to "say *come*," as well as "the Spirit and the bride." This is expressly said. "Am I my brother's keeper?" was the impious exclamation of a murderer. No Christians can have Cain's spirit; believing the *Bible*, and hence believing that their unregenerate friends and neighbors are under condemnation, and hastening to the pit where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever," they will feel a deep interest in them; they will pray for them, and will speak to them in the voice of Christian counsel and affectionate entreaty.

When Christians thus "hold forth the word of life" very powerful is the effect. It is not regarded as the discharge of professional duty; it can be resolved only into a solicitude perfectly justified by their belief, and legitimately flowing out of it. It is not public declamation; it is not preaching at arm's length: it is in private conference, fellow-man with fellow-man. Then it is, that truth comes warm, and comes in vital contact, and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," pricks the heart, and changes it from stone to flesh.

Harlan Page remarked, that "he could never be left alone with an impenitent sinner, without feeling that he stood beside an immortal soul, whose salvation or damnation depended on the passing moment." Hence he *improved* that moment; never after could that sinner say, "No man has cared for my soul." This was as it *should* be; this was true Christian devotedness; this was "holding forth the word of life;" and when all professing Christians shall imitate this exemplary disciple, converts will multiply like "the drops of the morning!"

I only add, that Christians are to hold forth the word of life *by contributing of their substance to disseminate the gospel.* It is a principle of their faith, that Christianity is universally to triumph. They are taught to pray in the name of their Master, that "his kingdom may come," and that "his will may be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven." They are pointed to the field of the world as white for the harvest, and it devolves upon them to spread throughout this field the knowledge of their Saviour. This work requires their contributions. They are to "hold forth the word of life," by supporting the various societies which are sending *abroad* that life. There are six hundred millions of degraded, brutalized heathen, who are dying at the rate of sixty thousand a day; and an appeal to Christians to evangelize and save them from perdition comes from every mountain, and plain, and island, and sea. They are told that Christ died to redeem these souls from pollution and torment; they are told of their obligations to this Redeemer for dying for *them*—that he is entitled to the most zealous devotion of all their powers, to all they are and have; they are told that they have solemnly professed and engaged to consecrate to him their influence and property; they are told that there is no want of access to the heathen—that they await the impress of Christianity; they are told that young men in the dew of their youth are waiting to be sent out as missionaries—that all which is now wanting are resources, and that "God loveth a cheerful giver." Appeals are thus made to their compassion, gratitude and sense of duty, to spread the tidings of salvation over the earth. They are thus called *generously* to "hold forth the word of life," till the world shall be illumined by it.

By *the church*, my friends, "is to be made known the manifold wisdom of God." By their pecuniary contributions, they are firmly, cordially, and unwearyingly to support every benevolent institution and enterprise. This is the value of money, to be able by it to bring to those sitting in darkness the lamp of life; to unfold to them the secrets of the eternal mind, and the glories of redeeming love. Money, *hoarded up*, of what use is it? It is like a spring of water in some inaccessible cavern: the water is there, in its smooth basin, but whom does it benefit? Money, however, *benevolently diffused*, is like a spring bubbling up on some frequented hill-side, and rolling its bright current into the vale below: you can trace it by the luxuriant verdure upon its banks; the animal draws from it, the bird dips his wing in it, and it refreshes and invigorates the thirsty peasant. So with the streams of wealth, starting from the liberal Christian. They roll, and *bless* as they roll. They go even to the desert and the wilderness, and these bud and blossom under their fertilizing power!

We have thus, as it was proposed to do, considered the three branches of our subject: the *life*, the *word* of life, and the *modes in which this life should be held forth*. A few remarks will close the discourse. And,

1st. We see why *sinners, on being converted and becoming Christians, are not immediately taken to heaven.*

They *might* be taken there, and be happy there; the process of sanctification once begun in the soul being always completed at death. But they are detained for a season in this world, to subserve an important purpose. They are detained here to show the effect of a believed gospel in all the appropriate circumstances of life. They are detained here to develop the results of that mighty change which has been wrought in them by the Spirit of God. They are detained here as monuments of grace to put forth their principles, and by their profession, example, direct efforts and resources, to "hold forth the word of life." Beyond dispute, this is the purpose for which they are expected to live. "Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Ye are the salt of the earth." Thus are Christians addressed by the Saviour himself. Having regenerated them by his Word and Spirit, and having himself departed from the earth till the time of the restitution of all things, he detains them here in his stead, living representatives of himself, living illustrations of the power of his gospel, persons whose active piety shall carry conviction and reformation to others. In this manner has he made it their exalted privilege and imperious duty to coöperate with him. He on high, "head over all things to his Church," interceding for them, protecting them, presenting their prayers and shedding down his Spirit,

and they on this his footstool, making the gospel their treasure and their guide, and inculcating its doctrines and precepts on their fellow-men. This is the organization of heaven, by which Satan is destined to be bound, sin exterminated, and by which Christianity, like a robe of glory, is to enwrap the globe.

2d. *Are you, my brethren and sisters, permit me to ask, accomplishing the design of your Master in keeping you in this world?*

Let me make this inquiry, for it is a most *important one!* There can scarcely be a greater mistake than that you are brought within the inclosures of the Church simply to *remain* there; that your names are upon the roll of its members for the only purpose of swelling the catalogue. No; Christ has other and higher designs than this in your conversion unto himself. He converted you to use you as instruments of good; he made you chosen vessels, that you might be the bearers of salvation. He gathered you into a Church, in order that your several rays of grace, thus embodied, might radiate an intense and brilliant light. "I thank my God," says Paul to the church at Rome, "that your faith *is spoken of* throughout the whole world." "Spoken of," *i. e.*, noted for its singularity as differing from that of the mass of mankind, *celebrated* every where! In this, that church was fulfilling the Divine purpose. They were "walking worthy the vocation wherewith they were called," so that their religious influence was felt far and wide. To recur again to the figure of the text, they were as *a light-house.* Like the colossal statue of Rhodes, in one of whose hands a light was placed, or like the "Pharos" of Alexandria at the mouth of the Nile, both remarkable for their elevation and splendor, they "held forth the word of life," as a beacon against danger, and as a guide to the desired haven. This is the duty of every church. They are to *have* light; and this light is to *shine.* Their lamps are to be kept trimmed and burning, or "he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" is, by their obscurity, disappointed and disgraced. Are you, my brethren, realizing the importance of this thing? Do all here who think themselves Christians make a public profession of the fact, or have they the ingratitude and hardihood to turn their backs on their crucified Lord? Do all here who *profess* to be Christians realize the obligations which this profession devolves upon them—with what power it endows them for doing good or evil, and that, if they are not doing good, they are actually doing evil? Is your conversation and example "as becometh the gospel of Christ"? Are you living as the spiritually alive among the dead, the pious among the profane, rebuking every form of sin by your holy and consistent walk? And feeling that "you are not your own, but are bought with a price," even with the riches of the blood of the beloved Lamb of God, are you giving, as God prospers you, to

further the interests and enlarge the boundaries of his kingdom?

3d. *Suffer me, in conclusion, dear hearers, to urge it afresh upon you, to "hold forth the word of life."*

"We remember," says one, "to have read a traveller's conversation with the keeper of the light-house at Calais. The watchman was boasting of the brilliancy of his lantern, which can be seen ten leagues at sea, when the visitor said to him, 'What if one of the lights should chance to go out?'

"'Never! impossible!' he cried, with a sort of consternation at the bare hypothesis. 'Sir,' said he, pointing to the ocean, 'yonder, where nothing can be seen, there are ships going by to every part of the world. If to-night one of my burners were out, within six months would come a letter—perhaps from India, perhaps from America, perhaps from some place I never heard of—saying, such a night, at such an hour, the light of Calais burned dim; the watchman neglected his post, and vessels were in danger. Ah, sir, sometimes in the dark nights, in the stormy weather, I look out to sea, and I feel as if the eye of the whole world were looking at my light! Go out! burn dim! Oh! never.'"

Was the keeper of this light-house so vigilant; did he feel so deeply the importance of his work and his responsibility; and shall Christians neglect *their* light and allow it to grow dim? Grow dim when, for need of its bright shining, some poor soul struggling amid the waves of temptation may be dashed upon the rocks of destruction? No, by no means. *Hold forth the word of life.* This is the way to recommend religion; this is the way to bless your generation; this is the way to honor your Saviour; and, I may add, this is the way to assist and encourage your minister. "Holding forth the word of life," says the apostle; why? "that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, nor labored in vain." Nor *labored in vain:* the lovely lives of the pious bring down upon the seed scattered by their pastor a rain of righteousness.

Oh, how much has been lost by our past neglect! How few have been reproved by our Christian deportment; how many have derived a license to sin from our untender walk; how little have we done for Him whose praises we expect to shout for ever and ever! "Let past ingratitude provoke our weeping eyes." What if we had wantonly put out the light of a light-house, and as a consequence many vessels with their crews had gone to pieces upon the rocks? We could weep *then.* But have we not in a spiritual sense *done* this, by allowing the brightness of our Christian character to be so obscured? Have we not reason to fear that by our remissness in duty, our unfaithfulness to our Lord, many souls have been wrecked for eternity, who are now, and ever will be, amidst *the breakers of fire?*

"For sadder sight the eye can know
Than proud bark lost, or seaman's woe,
Or battle fire, or tempest cloud,
Or prey bird's shriek, or ocean's shroud—
The shipwreck of the soul!"

Oh, resolve, disciples of Jesus, to live differently, and "hold forth the word of life!" The world expects it of you. Angels expect it of you. God the Father expects it of you. The blood of Calvary expects it of you!

SERMON DLXXXI.

BY REV. GEORGE THACHER,

PASTOR OF THE ALLEN STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

THIRSTING FOR GOD.

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"—PSALM xlii. 1, 2.

ONE of the most appalling truths that ever flash on the mind of a sinner awakened to the tremendous realities of religion, is his distant and perilous estrangement from God. Answering to this, one of the most powerful attractions experienced by the convert is that which inclines him to withdraw from the reach of earthly influences, and seek that Divine Presence which before he had carefully shunned. To the truth of this remark the consciousness of every renewed soul must bear unequivocal testimony; for the very idea of conversion implies a voluntary forsaking of the world and turning unto God, or a cheerful yielding of one's self to some inviting influence emanating from God. And this influence, whatever it be, holds its subject ever after in a willing captivity, and draws him continually nearer and nearer to the Infinite One. In other words, the child of God has a conscious tendency towards his heavenly Father, an uprising of the soul towards him, which, notwithstanding all its interruptions and abatements, never wholly loses its power, and at times seems to elevate his spirit into actual communion with his Maker.

It was under the power of this Divine attraction that the Psalmist exclaimed, in the words of our text, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

In the present discourse it is proposed to treat of that part of the Christian's experience which is called, in the expressive language of David,

THIRSTING FOR GOD.

This interesting theme will be sufficiently elucidated by considering—

I. *The causes of this spiritual thirst;* and

II. *The means of gratifying it.*

I. Of the *causes* of the renewed soul's longing for God, we may name,

1. *Admiration of the Divine Attributes.*

The human mind unsanctified commonly, if not always, takes a repulsive view of God. This is owing to the enmity of the heart operating on the intellect, and causing it to contemplate Jehovah in a false light. Looking at God from the position of a rebel, the individual's vision is discolored by selfishness and prejudice, so that his whole conception of the Divine Being becomes not only untrue but altogether unlovely.

But the Christian *loves* his Maker, and hence is disposed to discover the beauty and glory which adorn his Maker's character. Consequently he does in fact behold, in all the Divine self-manifestations, somewhat that is attractive and admirable, and by this means forms an idea of God as possessed of every quality that can render him glorious and adorable in the view of his creatures.

Now this admiration of the perfections of God, whatever its degree, naturally awakens a desire for clearer and more magnificent views of those perfections. Hence it is that the thoughtful and spiritual Christian finds himself thirsting for fuller displays of the Divine attributes, and praying, in the words of Moses, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Of all the beautiful and charming objects that attract his bodily or his mental eye, there is not one by any means so rich and ravishing as that sublime and perfect Being whose radiant glories shine forth from every part of his universal empire. The infinite variety of phenomena in the natural world, so valuable for their utility, and so marvellous for their beauty and grandeur, are a source of happiness to the Christian, chiefly because he here perceives the adorable attributes of nature's Author. And the complex being of man, admirable as it is in itself, is infinitely more so as a development of the power and wisdom and goodness of God. The stupendous plan of redemption, too, although unspeakably and eternally valuable to the believer for the personal benefits he derives therefrom, (as a sinner saved by grace,) and for that

reason worthy of his highest admiration, is also transcendently delightful as an exhibition of the glories of Him who formed that plan in the counsels of eternity. But the Being who is thus revealing himself on every side, in forms of wisdom and beauty and love, makes the Christian long to see more of his superlative excellency, and excites within his breast an irrepressible desire to stand, and gaze, and adore, in the unveiled presence of the Heavenly Majesty.

2. A second cause of the Christian's thirsting for God is found in his *love for the Divine Being*. We do not of course love every thing we admire. But in the case of the Christian, admiration and affection for God always co-exist. Yet the two states of mind are distinct, and each one is a separate cord drawing the saint upward to the bosom of his heavenly Father. As the beauty and glory of the Divine attributes inspire a longing after God, so does love. But love is much the stronger influence. Admiration of God is the gratification of the natural sentiment of taste—a pleasure like that which we derive from viewing a master-piece of art; and this admiration would doubtless be felt by every human being, could he be brought to contemplate the Divine perfections apart from his relations to the Divine government as a sinner. But love to God is a very different thing. It has reference to no one property or attribute in particular, but to the whole being of Jehovah. It is a certain sweet complacency in God, a delightful satisfaction in him as suited to the nature and wants of the soul. It implies that the soul sympathizes with God, and is happy in him as a friend whose natural and moral qualities it approves and loves to contemplate. Love signifies an indefinable union to the object of affection, which union, although indefinable, is conscious, heartfelt, voluntarily perpetuated, and blissful. The abstract nature of the emotion is the same in all cases of cordial attachment between intelligent beings, however it may differ in intensity, or in its moral quality. It always has the property, if circumstances admit, of drawing the person loving into the society of the person loved. In the instance before us, the renewed man is habitually attracted towards his God by the mysterious power of a holy affection. He longs for the Divine presence, that he may sit and gaze on Him whom his soul loveth. He thirsts for communion with God, that he may indulge in that free and delightful outpouring of heart before him, which so refreshes the spirit of a sympathetic being. He deeply desires a smile of love from Him whose favor he deems better than life. He feels that the society of the perfect God would render him happy to the extent of his capacity; that companionship with God would be consummate bliss. Unsanctified men are charmed by the inferior objects of earth, by wealth, honor, pleasure, or some endeared fellow-creature.

But the Christian's heart inclines to God as his source of supreme delight. Under the power of temptation he may seem for a season to forget his Maker, and to be insensible to his most sweet attractions. But he will assuredly break away from the evil snare, and rise again to luxuriate in the presence and fellowship of Jehovah. He cannot be long detained from this fountain of pure and heavenly joy. Absence from Him on whom his best affections rest embitters existence, and makes him cry out, as David did, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

3. This thirsting for God often arises from a *lively sense of Divine goodness in the dispensation of both temporal and spiritual benefits.*

Under the teaching of the Word and Spirit of God, the Christian learns to regard all his blessings as the fruit of the loving-kindness of the Lord. From the same sources he also learns his own utter unworthiness, and the infinite exaltation and adorableness of the Giver. And these considerations all combine to form in his mind the most enlarged idea of Jehovah's love to him. That such a being as God should grant even the smallest favor to so guilty a creature as himself is amazing; but the pouring of an unbroken stream of mercy and tenderness on him, from the cradle to the grave, is love that surpasses all power of description. But if the blessings strewn along the daily paths of life are so unspeakable, how can the gift of eternal salvation be adequately expressed? Now, all this goodness of God causes the Christian's heart to swell with the liveliest gratitude to the infinite Author of his happiness. But gratitude demands expression, and awakens a strong desire to behold the beloved benefactor. Accordingly, the grateful heart of the Christian thirsts for the presence of his bountiful and most gracious God, that he may praise him for his matchless love, and enjoy a near vision of his transcendent excellence. What Christian is he who does not delight to bow before his Maker, and offer up to him the most warm-hearted thanksgiving for his unmeasured munificence? What Christian is he who has not, at least occasionally, an intense longing *to see* that wonderful God who, although seated on the throne of supreme dominion, yet deigns to notice and bless the sinful children of men of whom he is one?

4. The thirsting for God of which we are treating often springs from *the Christian's deep sense of his wants as a sinner.*

Of every true child of God these three things may be affirmed: he feels his guilt in the sight of God; he hates his sins; he finds he pursuit of holiness an arduous and sometimes a discouraging work.

Impelled onward to a stern conflict with every kind of iniquity,

he makes alarming discoveries of his own guilt and weakness, and so learns his great need of help from the Lord his strength. He is conscious indeed of an unfeigned love of holiness, but, alas! the remains of his former depravity, and that moral weakness which depravity has induced, retard his progress towards that heavenly perfection for which he toils, and so oppress his heart as to elicit many a deep-drawn sigh for the presence and communion of God. He cannot relinquish the hope of attaining holiness and heaven; but so busy and artful is the infernal tempter, so many and powerful are his inward corruptions, so feeble are his purposes, and so multiplied and various the evil influences of the world, that he is too often forced almost to despair of success, and to feel that, if saved at all, he will be only scarcely saved. But in the midst of all his darkness and despondency, the Holy Ghost, whose temple he is, directs his thoughts to God, and reminds him that help may be found in Him. And most ardently does he thirst for the comfort which the presence of his Maker will afford. Most sincerely can he adopt the sentiment of the hymn:

"Oh that I knew the sacred place
Where I might find my God!
I'd spread my wants before his face,
And pour my woes abroad.

"I'd tell him how my sins arise,
What sorrows I sustain;
How grace decays, and comfort dies,
And leaves my heart in pain."

He is sinful and imperfect, but that God to whom he lifts his longing eyes is absolutely holy, and has boundless strength. In the mere thought of such a Being he finds his courage and strength renewed; but if he could approach the very presence of Jehovah and *tell* him of his numberless sorrows, then, he thinks, he would find a complete and sweet relief from all his troubles. Hence he thus addresses himself: "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for all my expectation is from him. Thou art nothing but a poor, feeble, guilty thing, and must perish if left alone; but thy God will sustain thee and comfort thee, if thou wilt but look to him with persevering faith. Hope thou in God, O my soul, and speedily he will shed about thee the rays of his presence, and satisfy thy deep and ardent thirst."

5. The Christian's thirsting for God is frequently produced by a *conviction of the inadequacy of his inward sources of happiness, and of the unsatisfying nature of all sublunary enjoyments.* Conscious of deep cravings, he yet plainly sees that in himself there would be nothing equal to his wants, even if his nature had not been impaired by sin. Still more unable is he to satisfy his desires, now that all his powers are vitiated by his participation in the universal sinfulness of our race. Neither as

he is, nor as he will be when made perfect, can he supply the large demands of his soul for happiness. He knows he cannot be fully satisfied in himself, however his powers may expand in the progress of his existence. God has endowed him with capacities for enjoyment which no internal resources can ever fill up. But his external means of happiness are equally insufficient—far from commensurate with his wants. Nothing on earth can make him completely blessed. No means of sensual pleasure, no intellectual treasures and employments, no social institutions, no one of all the comforts and joys of this life, nor all of them most felicitously combined and made as permanent as his own existence, can by any possibility meet the demands of his soul, and obliterate all sense of want. These things will render him happy in a degree, but he longs for something in addition to them all. God has made him for some other, higher enjoyment, and he has discovered the fact by his own experience.

On both these accounts, then, because of the limited resources of his own nature, and because of the comparative emptiness of all earthly pleasures, he *thirsts for God* as the only exhaustless fountain of delight. In Him he knows there is a fulness of high and holy blessedness which the universe besides cannot afford. Therefore he *panteth* after God. He longs with an intense outgoing of soul for the presence, fellowship, smiles, and love of his Divine Parent, as the only objects within the entire range of created and uncreated things that can actually *satisfy* his immortal desires. He feels that he was made to be happy, *supremely* happy, in God, and to be miserable *without* God, even though he were owner of the world. Therefore, when led away from this fountain of living waters by the force of some evil propensity, as he returns from his waywardness he is pained not only by keen remorse for his iniquity, but by bitter self-reproach and shame for his *folly*, because a little reflection would have taught him that to wander from God a single step, is to leave the most pure and exalted joy for the beggarly elements of wretchedness and woe. And all such experience should serve to bind him more closely to his Maker, cause him to dwell more constantly under the shadow of His wings, and to derive his most delightful pleasures from that communion with God which is freely allowed to every faithful follower of Christ.

6. This thirsting for God is a consequence of the *afflictions which the Christian is called to endure.*

It is an ordinance of God that every child of Adam, the Christian as well as others, shall suffer many sorrows. They are incident to every sphere of life; no combination of circumstances can exclude them,—no forethought, care, and prudence can forestall them. But afflictions, although as keenly felt by him as by other men, cause the Christian to look upward to God for con-

solation and relief. He does not, indeed, undervalue human sympathy and aid, nor is he unaffected by the consideration that his sufferings will in due time come to an end. He knows that the richest balm for all his sorrows is in God, and that the Divine Physician can make even his wounds and bruises a means of health and vigor. Therefore he greatly desires to be admitted into communion with Jehovah, in order to find rest and refreshment from the weariness of life, alleviation of all his woes, and grace to turn them to the profit of his soul. He doubts not that God sympathizes in his trials far more deeply than his fellowmen, that he understands the nature and degree of all human misery, that he is a compassionate Father especially to the children of his grace, and that he is infinitely skilful in healing the griefs of the broken spirit. Hence he thirsts for God.

Affliction also forcibly reminds the Christian of his sins, humbles him in view of them, and so brings him to God in confession and supplication, and the most sincere and earnest expressions of sorrow, faith, and love.

Affliction, too, recalls the earthly sufferings of the blessed Saviour, and melts the heart by affecting remembrances of that redeeming love which made him willing to undergo such deep and dreadful woes for the sake of sinners worthy to perish.

Such, then, are some of the causes from which result that powerful longing of the renewed soul which the pious Psalmist styles "*panting*, or *thirsting*, after God."

II. Let us now proceed to the other main division of the subject, and consider the *means* by which the Christian seeks to gratify this spiritual *thirst*.

On this topic we remark in general that the Christian resorts, for the purpose now stated, to all those modes of communion with God which Scripture and an enlightened and sanctified reason suggest. Among them are—

1. *The studious reading of God's Word.* The Bible is a revelation of Jehovah to man, and as such is to be regarded as the voice of the Deity whispering in the ears of his earthly creatures. In this book are made known the perfect will of God, and the way of salvation; and in these, so fully set forth as they are, there may be seen reflected the glorious image of the Creator. The Christian, then, studying the Word of inspiration in all its parts and mutual connections, with that spirit which prompted the language of our text, will feel that he is having intercourse with God, that he is looking in on the Divine mind, and reading the wonderful workings of that mind towards the children of men. As he discovers a new doctrine, or takes a novel view of a familiar one, his heart is delighted with the discovery, as revealing to him fresh knowledge of his adorable God. Nor does the study grow irksome, for while it gratifies his thirsting for God, it

also increases it, and leads him on to a more thoughtful and earnest perusal of a volume so full of the excellent glory of Jehovah. From day to day and from year to year he learns more and more of the boundless depth of truth therein contained, every particle of which pertains to that blessed Being whom his soul loves, and concerning whom he desires to know all that is to be known. As he gazes on the sacred page, the Divine likeness becomes continually more and more distinct, and beautiful, and lovely, and ineffably glorious, far transcending in every feature all that he had ever conceived as possible to exist even in the perfections of a God. But,

2. The Christian indulges his thirst for God in the *exercise of devout and holy contemplation*, apart from the perusal of Scripture. He sometimes meditates, as did David, in the night watches, and inflames his soul with a heavenly fire by musing on the Divine glories when sleep and darkness have removed all disturbing causes. He also studies the works of God in nature, and in every thing sees some manifestation of the wisdom, or goodness, or power, or mysterious sovereignty of the Eternal Creator. He carefully observes the providence of God, and is led to wonder at the Divine skill in bringing good out of evil, in accomplishing his own plans in spite of the selfish indifference or opposition of men, in answering the prayers of his people, in prospering Zion, and in all things promoting his own glory. The Christian who has a cultivated mind will often exercise his imagination in meditating on God, and thus invest him with a radiance and beauty which does not appear to one who fails to employ this faculty of the soul. In some favored hour he will steal away from society, banish from his thoughts all worldly cares and pleasures, and give himself up without restraint to those sublime and ravishing views of God—*his* God and Father—which a skilful fancy, guided by reason and Scripture, pictures before the mind. Not that he embellishes his conception of God with any fictitious adornment, by means of imagination, but only obtains a far more vivid idea of those qualities and attributes which the Bible warrants him to ascribe to God.

3. The Christian allays his thirst for God by *prayer and praise*. In these services he draws nigh to the presence of the Lord, and addresses him as it were face to face, and has sometimes such a sense of the Divine presence as overpowers his soul with awe, or elevates it with rapturous emotion, or diffuses through his mind a calm and holy joy, like that which pervades the society of heaven. At the throne of grace, too, he receives an increase of spiritual strength, and from time to time finds all his Christian virtues acquiring new vigor and stability. In the closet he gives unrestrained freedom to the struggling feelings of his breast, and enjoys sweet relief in thus unburdening his mind

before his covenant-keeping God. At the family altar and in the prayer-meeting, he experiences solid delight in the communion of his spirit with the Holy Comforter. But not at these places alone does the saint satisfy the panting of his soul for the Divine presence. In the sanctuary he meets his God, who delights there to manifest his mercy and love to his humble worshippers. The house of the Lord is hallowed in the mind of the Christian by the most sacred and delightful associations. It is a holy place; it always wears an air of solemnity, always reminds him of the Infinite Being to whose honor it was erected, and brings up to view the blissful relation which he sustains to that Being as his adorable Sovereign and Parent. It was doubtless in reference to the temple at Jerusalem that the Psalmist penned the text. At the time he wrote it, he was an exile from the holy city, far removed from the house of the Lord; and in remembrance of the sweet spiritual refreshment he had there so often enjoyed, he felt his soul burning to stand again within its consecrated walls, and to join in its beautiful, impressive, and holy worship. And thus it is with every devout child of God: he is glad to enter the courts of the Lord's house with thanksgiving and praise, because in so doing the wants of his soul are satisfied; he is quickened and made joyful by the holy services there performed.

4. The Christian who truly thirsts for God will *carefully avoid sin*, lest by committing it he should grieve God to withdraw his presence and leave him in darkness and sorrow.

5. The Christian thirsting for God, not by any means fully satisfied with the manifestations of God to his soul in the Bible, in contemplation, and in worship, and sensible that his thirst can be perfectly gratified only in heaven, *keeps his eye and his heart steadfastly fixed on that world, and labors habitually to attain to an everlasting residence there.* For there he knows that all hindrances to communion with God will be for ever removed, and that every redeemed spirit will enjoy a clear and most beatific vision of the Eternal, and a full realization of all those hopes which the inspired Word awakens in the believer's breast. There the soul, made perfect in the likeness of Jehovah, will be capacitated to receive and enjoy all the fulness of God for ever.

In bringing this discourse to a close, it may be remarked,

1st. That if any professor of religion has not something of the spirit which has now been described, he is deceiving himself, for it is absolutely inseparable from true piety. No human soul can be brought into union with God by faith in Christ, without experiencing some active desires for sensible communion with his Maker, and this is thirsting after God.

2d. The subject we have been considering gives us an exalted view of the mediatorial work of the Redeemer. For it is by virtue of his atonement alone that the soul is ever made to

thirst for God, or that this holy thirst can be at all gratified. But for him, men would never have seen God in such a light as to be won by his attractions, nor have cherished towards him sincere affection, nor have had any of that inward spiritual experience which causes them to pant after God. Nor would there have been any possible way of access by which the soul could approach its Maker, and be happy in his presence and in the manifestations of his infinite glories. But now every believer has free admission to the throne of grace, and unlimited sources of bliss in God, even while in the flesh, and can anticipate with assurance the hour of full communion with Him in the midst of his unveiled perfections in heaven. Once the Christian was like a star that has left its orbit and shot away from the sphere of its sun's attraction into regions of darkness and chaos; now he is like that star brought back to its appointed place in the vast system to revolve again in harmony with its fellow-satellites around the great central orb, to derive light and heat from the rays which it sends forth.

Finally, may no one be unmindful of the vast difference between thirsting for God now, and thirsting for a drop of water in the world of despair. The one is a means of the most exalted and satisfying pleasure enjoyed by mortals, and a sure pledge of perfect and immortal happiness in heaven; the other is a raging fever that never can be slaked, but must burn on and consume the soul for ever with its unquenchable fires. Take care, then, O cold-hearted professor and thoughtless sinner, lest by your indifference to God now, you shut yourselves out for ever from all those fountains of bliss which can meet the wants of your undying souls in eternity. Acquaint yourselves with God, and be joined to Him in bonds of everlasting love, that He may be your portion and joy while your existence shall endure.

RIVETED TO CHRIST.

CHRIST is a foundation—the foundation of our hope, of our peace, of our salvation; the foundation of all true worship, of all true access to God; the foundation of that spiritual temple which Jehovah is rearing to himself amid the ruins of the fall. He is the only foundation; the foundation that the Lord himself has laid for the hopes of a perishing world. He is the corner-stone—the support and the connection of the whole building—the chief corner-stone, chosen, tried, precious, sure, adjusted by infinite wisdom and infinite power to its position of honor, of

strength, and of beauty, in the stupendous work of man's redemption.

Am I built on this foundation? Men may disallow it, but God has chosen it, and it shall stand. Have I then chosen it as my foundation? Do I rest upon it as my confidence and support? Am I cemented to this foundation, riveted to it, so that all my interests are consolidated with the interests of Christ? "Think it not enough," says the excellent Leighton, "think it not enough that you know this stone is laid, but see whether you are built on it by faith. The multitude of imaginary believers lie round about it, but they are never the better nor the surer for that, any more than stones that lie loose in heaps near unto a foundation, but are not joined to it. There is no benefit to us by Christ, without union with him; no comfort in his riches, without an interest in them, and a title to them, by virtue of that union. This union is the spring of all spiritual consolations. And faith, by which we are thus united, is a Divine work. "He that laid this foundation in Sion with his own hand, works likewise, with the same hand, faith in the heart, by which it is knit to this corner-stone." Yes, faith is the cement that unites the soul to this sure foundation—the ethereal link that binds it evermore to Christ. "To whom coming as to a living stone, ... ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."

Have I this faith? "To you who believe he is precious"—an object of honor and esteem. Is Christ precious to me? Is he not only an object of fitful admiration and affection—as when his attractions are portrayed in eloquent discourse—but is he *precious*, my only honor, my ever chief delight? Then am built on him by faith; then may I claim that blessed promise, "He that believeth on him shall not be confounded—shall not make haste." Then all my interests are safe; then *I* am safe —for ever safe.

In the far South there is a river which, ordinarily still and shallow, in the spring time is swollen by heavy rains or melted snow from the mountains, and whose sudden freshets devastate the whole country through which it flows. I have heard that one who wished to avail himself of this stream for manufacturing purposes, selected a site for his building where the foundation was of living rock; this rock was drilled at various points to the depth of several inches, huge stones selected and shaped with care were then laid upon it in cement, each stone being furnished also with iron bolts that fitted into the sockets prepared in the foundation, and were there soldered by fused metal; thus was each stone bolted to its fellow, and the whole to the foundation. The neighbors laughed at such pains-taking and expense, and in their improvident way thought it better to take the risk of a freshet.

To what purpose was a pyramid of granite built, beside a shallow summer rill? The next spring there came a freshet of unprecedented suddenness and force. Wide the torrent overflowed its banks, sweeping down plantations, fences, trees, huts, houses, with appalling devastation. The occupants fled in dismay; confounded at the sudden ruin, they made haste to escape for their lives. Meanwhile, the workmen of this factory pursued their customary labors within its walls; from the windows they saw the roaring flood, the crashing trees and buildings, the torrent of destruction rolling by; yet they felt no alarm, they were not confounded with surprise, they were not agitated by one anxious thought, they did not make haste to secure their safety by flight; they knew that they were safe—nowhere could they be safer than there, founded on the rock, bolted to the rock. Thus it is with the soul that is built on Christ. Secure in him, it cannot know a fear. No danger can surprise it, no agitation or alarm can disturb its peace. It shall not make haste, it shall not ask, Whither shall I flee?—for only where it is, can it be safe. "They that are disappointed and ashamed in their hopes, run to and fro, and seek after some new resource. The believing soul makes haste *to* Christ, but it never finds cause to hasten *from* him. . . . Such times may come as will shake all other supports, but this holds out against all—*though the earth be removed, yet will not we fear.* Though the frame of the world were cracking about a man's ears, he may hear it unaffrighted who is built on this foundation. And in that great day wherein *all faces shall gather blackness* and be filled with confusion, that have neglected to make Christ their stay when he was offered them, then it shall appear how happy they are who have trusted in him; *they shall not be confounded*, but shall *lift up their faces and be acquitted in him.*"

Come then, my soul, and join thyself to Christ alone. Build upon this sure foundation, and rivet thyself and thine immortal destiny to Christ, by every tie of gratitude and affection, with every fibre of thy being. Be not content to *have* believed in Him, to have built upon Him thy hope, but daily by new bonds rivet thyself to this living and eternal rock. In thy morning meditations, let some new aspect of Christ, some new application of Christ, some new adaptation of his words and his life to thy condition and thy wants, be as a burning bolt of love to bind thee unto Him, and let the glow of devotion at eventide, the grateful remembrance of what Christ hath been to thee this day, weld and clinch that bolt for ever.

Oh, let me be established on the rock! Then shall I be firm in every trial, in every conflict, in every temptation; then when the cold, dark waters of death shall rise about me, I shall not be

confounded; though they gurgle in my ears, and chill the life-blood in my heart, yet I shall touch bottom all the way, shall feel the rock beneath my feet, and shall emerge upon the crystal pavement on the other side.—*N. Y. Independent.*

INFLUENCE.

As, in the external and visible world, the fall of a pebble agitates, not perceptibly indeed, yet really, the whole mass of the earth; thus in the world of morals every act of every spirit is telling upon the whole system of moral beings to which God has bound him. No man leaves the world in all things such as he found it. The habits which he was instrumental in forming may go on from century to century, an heir-loom for good or for evil, doing their work of misery or of happiness, blasting or blessing the country that has now lost all records of his memory. In the case of some, this influence is most sensible. Every age beholds and owns their power. Such men have lived. The Church yet feels throughout all lands the influence of the thoughts that passed, perhaps in the solitude of midnight, through the bosom of Paul, as he sat in the shadows of his prison, an old and unbefriended man; thoughts which, lifting his manacled hands, he spread in his epistles before the eyes of men, there to remain for ever. They feel the effect of the pious meditations of David while roaming on the hill-side, an humble shepherd lad; of the family piety of Abraham, and of the religious nurture that trained up the infancy of Moses. Every nation is affected at this moment by the moral power that emanated from the despised Noah, as that preacher of righteousness sat among his family, perhaps dejected and faint with unsuccessful toil, teaching them to call upon God, when all the families of the earth besides had forgotten him. And if the mind, taking its flight from the narrow precincts of these walls, were to wander abroad along the peopled highways, and to the farthest hamlets of our own land, and, passing the seas, to traverse distant realms and barbarous coasts, every man whom its travels met, nay, every being of human mould that has ever trodden this earth in earlier ages, or that is now to be found among its moving myriads, has felt or is feeling the influence of the thoughts of a solitary woman, who, centuries since, stood debating the claims of conscience and of sin amid the verdant glories of the yet unforfeited paradise. —*Williams.*

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 10, Vol. XXVI.] OCTOBER, 1852. [Whole No. 310.

SERMON DLXXXII.

BY REV. MANCIUS S. HUTTON, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE WASHINGTON SQUARE R. D. CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

"And when they were come to a place which is called Calvary, *there they crucified him.*"—Luke xxiii. 33.

The death of Christ is an event which surpasses all that have occurred or ever can occur in the universe. Stars in their courses might have fought in the hour of his crucifixion, and would have been unheeded. All hell was gathered around that cross; all heaven surrounded the place with their chariots of fire.

It was doubtless with deep and absorbing interest that the intelligences of heaven contemplated the work of creation. The morning stars, we are told, sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. But the death of Christ was a more wonderful event—farther reaching, involving and displaying more of the glory of God—though not in its merely visible aspect. There was not the same magnificent display to the eye. It was more beautiful to behold the massy architecture of heaven float in spangled beauty into existence. It was apparently more wonderful to see the dry land emerge like the land of the blest from the midst of the waters, and, amid the low murmur of the retiring waves, clothe itself with verdure. But to the spiritual eye, and with regard to its moral effects, the death of Christ is by far the more sublime and wonderful event, displaying more of the glory of God; and among its wonders must we place the strange fact, that this glory of God should radiate from a cross, that our guilty world should be selected as affording the richest display of God's glory, and that the most luminous point of that glory should be a malefactor's cross—a cross of ignominy, which the malice of Satan

and the depravity of man had reared in Judea, to crucify the Son of God and of man. Let this cross and the death of its victim, then, be our theme.

The train of remark which I have pursued has prepared your minds for the position, that, as the death of Christ was the greatest, most wonderful and most important event which ever occurred or ever can occur, so every intelligent being in the universe is interested in it, and all have shared or will share in it.

I. In illustration of this position, allow me to lead your minds to contemplate the death of our Lord—

1. *As the act of the holy angels;*
2. *Of Satan and the fallen angels;*
3. *Of man;*
4. *Of Christ himself;* and
5. *Of God the Father.*

And, 1. As the *act of the holy angels.*

They approved of it, they rejoiced in the anticipation of it, they furthered it, and will ever rejoice in it, singing the praises of the Lamb that was slain. These things make them so far participators in the deed, that we may with propriety style it *the angels' act.*

It is expressly said of these holy beings, that they ministered unto him; and the declaration of the apostle Paul, that in his humiliation he was seen of angels, conveys the idea that they never were absent from him while he was wending his way to the cross. He was seen of angels on that night when he condescended to be born, as the first step towards the cross. They saw him, Deity shrouded in dust, and broke forth in admiring song, "Glory to God in the highest."

They saw him tired, worn, wearied, and fainting with hunger, when Satan had left him after the temptation, and they came on their swift pinions, and ministered to him.

They saw him stretched in agony on the ground in Gethsemane, and came to strengthen him for the cross. They came not to deliver him in his hour of agony, but to cheer and urge him on.

They saw him on the cross, and, in serried ranks, whole legions stood prepared, had he but wished it, to sweep in their resistless might the guilty murderers from the face of the earth. But no hand is raised. That mighty angel who passed over Egypt in a single night, and left death and wailing in every house, stirred not. That powerful angel who but breathed on the Assyrian army, and the horse and the rider lay cold in death, held in his breath. They could rescue the Son of God, but would not, desired it not. May we not truly say, in view of all this, that they were participators in the death of Christ? Yes, it was *the act of the holy angels.*

2. The death of Christ was the *act of Satan and the fallen angels.*

The character and history of Satan, previous to the advent of Christ, would lead us to conclude that he would prove a vigorous and important actor in the life and death of Christ. It was, indeed, predicted at the beginning that there would be bitter enmity and severe conflict between him and Christ. He was to bruise Christ's heel, and Christ was to bruise his head. We accordingly find, that no sooner did Jesus begin to attract attention as the sent of God, than he became obnoxious to the machinations of Satan and he himself undertook personally to commence the conflict by meeting Christ, and, as the acknowledged sovereign of the world, endeavoring to purchase him off from his great work, by offering him all the kingdoms of the world. This is evidently the design of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. Failing in this, we find him henceforward in determined and unceasing conflict with Christ. How far the acute and powerful intellect of Satan was enabled to discover the mysteries of the plan of salvation, we are unable to say. Whether he knew nothing of it, or was only acting on the principle that he must oppose in every way the wishes of Christ, or whether his malice sometimes got the ascendency of his wisdom, we know not; but there certainly was in the conduct of Satan towards Christ an appearance of indecision, as though either his wisdom were at a loss, or his dread of him made him uncertain how to act. He knew Christ; he feared him, and he wished Christ to let him alone. Thus far we are expressly told, but his actions seem characterized by indecision. At one time we find him trying, through the love and regard of Peter, to induce him not to die; then again, by entering Judas and prompting him to betray his Master into the hands of those who sought his life, it would seem that he had changed his plans, and desired to have him put to death.

There is, however, one principle discoverable through the whole course of Satan, so far as his agency is made known to us. He knew that sin was the only thing which God hated, and his idea seems to have been, when he found that he could not make Christ sin, that while he must do every thing to annoy and oppose him, he must also endeavor to make men act so much like fiends, and so treat their incarnate God, as to disgust Christ with them, and thus induce him to leave them to perish with the fallen spirits whom they so closely resembled. Hence we trace the desertion of his disciples, the denial of Peter, the betrayal by Judas, and the general ingratitude of the shouting throng. It is your hour, and the power of darkness, says Christ to those who came to take him; and it is certain that Satan ruled in that hour. He knew Christ, as I remarked, and he seems to have imagined that if he could only succeed in inducing the beings whom he came to save

to reject and murder their Saviour, reject and murder the Son of God, clothed in human nature and on a visit of mercy, he would make them guilty of a crime which devils never committed, and thus make them, as he did our first parents, their own self-destroyers; and that the mercy of God, thus treated, would be chased from the world to return nevermore, and that man would henceforth be left under the dominion of hell. But the development of Satan's agency, through the instrumentality of man, is without doubt the smaller part of that agency. As I have remarked, Christ expressly declares, at the time when the soldiers seized him, that it was the hour of the power of darkness; the omnipotent arm which had hitherto set bounds to the malice of the fallen spirits was withdrawn, and these dreadful powers allowed full liberty. It is also worthy of note, that when our Saviour entered that night into the garden of Gethsemane, he thrice exhorts his disciples to watch lest they enter into temptation; as though the garden at that hour was filled with the tempters, and could our eyes have looked into the spiritual world, we would doubtless have seen the thrones and principalities of darkness all gathered in that garden and clustering around the cross, and hurling down on the uncomplaining sufferer their fiery darts, seeking to add to his mental agonies. Yes, we should have seen Jesus in the hands of him who is said to have the power of death, and death and Satan apparently triumphing. Satan prompted the death of Christ; Satan instigated and aided in the cruel deed.

3. The death of Christ must also be viewed as the *act of man.*

The truth of this position can never be disputed. The only instrumentality in the overt act was that of man. Him, says the apostle to the Jewish Sanhedrim, have ye taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain. And again, in Acts iv. 27, the apostle says: "For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." Instead then of dwelling on this point, I would only have you notice what care the sacred historians have used to unite both Jews and Gentiles in this act. We have been too much inclined to regard the Jews as the only persons who were to bear this guilt; and their crime was indeed the greater: they were the cruel instigators, and shouted the exciting cry, "Crucify him, crucify him;" they urged the Roman governor until he did not dare to refuse his assent; they were the persons who, with fiendish malice, taunted him on the cross with his godlike deeds, and mocked his dying agonies. But let us also remember, that from the hour in which he was delivered to the soldiers by Pilate, the only hands laid upon him were Gentile hands. It was a Gen-

tile governor who gave him up; it was we Gentiles who platted the crown of thorns; we Gentiles who mocked him with the purple robe and the reed sceptre; it was one of us Gentiles who nailed his sacred body to the cross, placed him between the malefactors, and thrust the spear into his side and heart. Jews and Gentiles did it; it was their united act; it was man, guilty man, who did the wicked deed.

4. The death of Christ must also be viewed as *his own act.*

On this assertion I need not dwell. Jesus, we all know, died willingly; he placed himself in the hands of his enemies; he foreknew and predicted his death; he again and again declared that he came for the express purpose of dying; that he desired to die for man; that he himself laid down his life, and that no one took it from him. There never was a moment when he could not have stopped in his work and returned to heaven; but he steadily and unwaveringly pursued his path to the cross, rejoicing and thanking God when the hour came. No; no one can doubt that Jesus died of his own free will, came to die, gave himself up to die. It was most clearly *his own act.*

5. Once more: The death of Christ is to be viewed also as the *act of God.*

The Bible is equally explicit as to this truth: indeed, this is the great theme of revelation. If this be not truth, no truth ever came from God. God sent him for the express purpose of dying on the cross. He so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotton Son for this end. "Forasmuch," says Paul, "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy death." He was the Lamb slain by God's own appointment, from the foundation of the world. "Him," says the apostle, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain;" and how determinate that counsel was, may be seen all along the pages of the Bible. It was predicted soon after the fall of man. It was shadowed forth in a variety of types. The paschal lamb represented it, and it was prefigured by the daily sacrifices. God had before determined every minute particular respecting it: the price which should be paid for his blood, the scourging, the mocking, the nailing to the cross, the thrust of the spear, the hidings of the Father's face, all had been foretold. Nay, the prophet says, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him."

Thus clear and undeniable is the evidence that, as Peter declares, he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. God did it. *It was his act.*

II. We are next led to inquire into the nature of the act, as viewed in this manifold light. We have seen that in the transaction

the holy angels, Satan and the fallen angels, men, Christ and God were joint participators. All the intelligent beings in the universe thus represented among the actors, we should therefore expect that all intelligent beings will be in some way affected by it; nor should we be surprised to find that the cross of Jesus becomes the touchstone by which the character and destiny of every created intelligent being will be judged and decided. This is foreshadowed in the point now before us—the *nature* of the act.

You will see, on a moment's reflection, that the nature of the act, as to its moral character, depends upon the state of heart with which it is regarded.

1. Look at the death of Christ as the act of the *holy angels*, and what a beautiful exhibition have you of the holiness, loveliness and amiability of these bright and holy intelligences. The scenes of Calvary must have been to them most mysterious. They saw their Lord, before whom they were wont to bow, humbled, insulted, treated with cruelty and indignity; and yet so unwavering was their confidence in the power and wisdom of God, that they aided with joyful alacrity in the strange work, and sympathized with Jesus in every trial. Around him they ever flocked, either praising God in song, or strengthening and administering to his necessities. How great also their sympathy, their compassion and love, for the fallen sons of men! We need not wonder at the announcement, that there is joy in heaven among the angels of God over a single penitent; their whole conduct presents them in a most amiable light. How wide the difference between them and Satan!

2. Look at the death of Christ as the act of *Satan*, and what a terrific display have you of the malignant nature of this fallen spirit, and of course of that sin which has reduced him to this state. You see in his conduct perfect malevolence. How entirely must sin have changed his once loving nature! He knew Jesus. He knew that the Being who stood before him in human form was in fact his Creator; the same before whom he had once bowed in adoring love and gratitude. Yet finding him by his assumption of human nature apparently in his power, he seeks to sweep him from his own world. He knows that he is the Holy One of Israel—God, all good, all kind, all wise; and yet such is his malignent nature, he determines to injure him to the utmost of his power, and if possible to destroy him. He knew also that his mission in this world was to redeem man from sin, and make him holy and happy, and he only hated the more, and determined to oppose the more bitterly.

The cross of Christ then, while it displays to the universe the oveliness o e holy angels, exhibits the inveterate malice of Satan and the fallen spirits, and shows that our utter ruin is the real

object of these wicked spirits, in seeking to retain that dominion over the hearts of men which sin has given them, and which we, alas! allow them to hold.

3. Look next at the nature of the act as performed by *man*.

Allow me to recall to your minds the fact distinctly noticed, that the death of Christ was the combined act of Jew and Gentile. The Jews, you will remember, tried and condemned him in their own court, for declaring himself to be the Son of God; a title which they justly understood as claiming equality with God. But desiring to inflict upon him the shameful death of the cross, which was a Roman punishment, they bring him before the judgment-seat of the Gentiles. There, though repeatedly declared to be innocent, he found no protection, and was given up to be crucified. Thus as it were the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles, concurred in rejecting and murdering him.

What a striking display have we here of the ignorance and depravity of the human heart! Christ claimed to be God. He was God manifest in the flesh. He declares that his works are the Father's works, and that those who had seen him had seen the Father. The idea is, that if the Father, God over all, had become incarnate instead of the Son, he would act just as the Son had done. Christ's character and life were thus the moral character of Jehovah, mapped out and reduced in its dimensions, to the comprehension of our feeble faculties. I could wish that I had time to dwell upon his life in this view for a few moments, but you are all more or less acquainted with his path. It was a quiet path, and always even; it was full of blessedness, he went about doing good; he not only gave the richest and fullest instruction as to duty to those around him, but he ministered to their wants and relieved their sufferings. The sick he healed; to the blind he gave sight; to the deaf hearing; the lame he made to walk, and in more than one instance he raised the dead to life, and converted tears of sorrow into those of joy. In one word, while he trod our earth, with the calm, conscious dignity of a sovereign, and the winds and waves made haste to obey him, he rendered himself the servant of every one who sought his aid; and to the bowed down child of sorrow, he proffered it unsought. Nay, he was willing to die to save and bless man. And yet *this*, *this* was the man, the impersonation of all excellence, with not a shadow of a fault or a weakness, with not even a virtue out of place, a living incarnation of Divine Providence, this God manifest in the flesh, God acting as a man—*this* was the man against whom Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together. They knew not God—could not estimate his character. They came out against him as against a thief, with swords and staves, to take him. They bound those kind and holy hands, which had wrought so many deeds of

mercy. They spat upon him, buffeted him, and condemned him to die. Not even the spectacle of Jesus all lacerated by the scourge, and his body covered with blood, not his uncomplaining silence, his pallid cheek and his tottering step, excited any commiseration. It was not enough that this God-man must die; not enough that he must die on the cross; not enough that he must die suspended between two malefactors; but they must seek to aggravate his dying pains by fiendish taunts and jeers. Never before or since, save perhaps in infidel France, was there such a scene. Crowds have gathered around the dying criminal, and every man in that crowd may have felt that the criminal suffered justly; but still, when they saw him struggling in death, there were pitying hearts and perchance tearful eyes in that crowd. But in the shouting throng around the cross of Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, there was no bowed, melting heart, no moistened eye. Such, my hearers, does the death of Christ show man to be, when his God and Creator is placed in his hands. He cannot see his God. He knows not what he does when he crucifies him. Say not in reply, Had we been there, we would have acted differently, for Christ has been set before you often from the pulpit and at the sacramental board, and you have seen no comeliness in him; *you* have rejected him; you have shed no tear over your sins as the real cause of his sufferings. No; you would not have acted differently. The conduct of men in this act was human nature, the nature of Jew and Gentile, showing itself when it had God shrouded in human form in its power. It is written, and the death of Christ proves its truth: "The carnal heart is enmity against God."

4. In contrast with this display of man's feeling towards God, seen in inflicting the death of Christ, how striking is the feeling of Christ towards man when we regard his death as *his own* free act! Greater love, he himself remarks, can no man show for his friend than to lay down his life for him. But through love to us Christ did far more than that. He laid down far more than life, and for those who could not with any propriety be called his friends. The divine character of our Lord precludes the idea that he did not foresee all which he would have to endure in accomplishing his loving design for man. Endeavor, then, to imagine something of the vision which lay stretched out before his eye when he undertook to die for us. There was man himself, with the long black catalogue of his crimes, his hardness of heart, his opposition to God, presenting no one redeeming or loveable quality, and virtually saying to him: "Son of God, we do not ask you to redeem us. We love sin; we hate God. If thou comest into our world, we will reject thee, revile thee, do all we can to oppose thee; we will falsely accuse thee, will buffet thee, will scourge thee, will spit upon thee, and will crucify thee; we will laugh at thy

agonies and taunt thee in thy sufferings; we will surround thy cross and disturb thy dying throes by our exulting shouts; and when thou hast endured all, through long ages will we reject thy love, and scorn thy invitations, and generation after generation shall pass on to that death from which thou wouldst save us. Son of man, die not for us; we ask it not at thy hands." We may also imagine the fallen spirits to appear before him, and, in order to deter him, rehearse what they would do. We may imagine them to say: "We will oppose thee, Son of God, at thy every step. All our mighty powers of evil will we array against thee. We will not tamely give up our dominion over the world: we have struggled for it, and we have obtained it; it is ours, and we will rouse it against thee; we will ourselves assail thee, and give thee no respite from a struggle with sin. Son of God, if thou wilt rescue man, thou must meet hell in all its power, all its sin, and all its hatefulness to thy pure soul."

To these we may add the appeals of the holy angels. "Enter not on this work," we may imagine them to say, "for if thou dost, thou must leave the bosom of thy Father, our God most holy; thou must leave the anthem peals of our happy minstrelsy; and instead of being surrounded by us, robed in the brightness and holiness which thou hast thyself given us, thou wilt be attended by unholy, ungrateful, and polluted throngs; instead of our smiles, thou wilt meet the frowns and curses of men and the scowls of fiends; instead of our songs of honor to God, the cruel blasphemies and the plottings of rebellion will alone fall on thy ear. Let man perish, and we will be thy agents to watch over a new race whom thou shalt create, who shall love and honor thee. Son of God, men are not worthy of thy friendship; even of thy very disciples, some will deny thee, some will betray thee, and all will desert thee in thy need. Go not on this mission." And to complete the picture, we may imagine the Father himself to add: "Son of God, this is not all: not only will the world which thou wouldst redeem be against thee; not only must thou meet Satan on ground which he calls his own, and power be allowed him to bruise thy heel; not only must thy holy angels be withdrawn from thee; but even I must be against thee; I must summon the sword of my omnipotent justice to awake against thee; I must withdraw from thee on the cross, must roll the thunders of my wrath around thy head, and hurl the lightning of my indignation against sin upon thy defenseless bosom. Son of God, if thou wilt save man, thou must die—die all alone—die crying to me, in vain." To all this, clearly presented to the mind of Jesus, his only reply is, "Father, lo, I come, to do thy will, O God." Thus loving man, thus anxious to save man, does the Saviour's part in the act of his own death present him. Does it not present him in a light which should command our entire hearts? But I must go.

5. We have yet to glance at the death of Christ as *the act of God.*

In this view, it has been the theme of wonder and of song in heaven and on earth, and it ever will be. It presents the character of God in a light and effulgence so endearing and so glorious, that eternity will not suffice to learn and admire; vain would be any effort of mine to delineate it. His own Word tells us that it shows his justice in sweet union with his mercy—his righteousness in union with his truth—that it is the wisdom of God in union with his omnipotence; and upon all and over all it writes in glowing characters, "God is love." He *so* loved the world as to give his only-begotton Son; and let it not be forgotten, that in thus giving his Son, he exhausted his infinite treasury. God can give no greater gift, for in giving his Son, he gave himself! And for what gave he him? Why, to save the souls of men—to save the souls of even that shouting, wicked, Satan-possessed crowd, disturbing by their taunts the dying hour of his well-beloved Son. Oh! what an exhibition have we here of the value at which God holds the soul of man, as well as of his loving nature—of his delight to bless. What an awful lustre does it throw upon the justice, holiness, and truth of God, and above all on his love. When we look at the cross of Jesus, it seems almost as though God loved us more than he did his well-beloved Son, and hated sin as deeply as he loved us.

III. To complete my plan in this discourse, I ought to add a third point, viz.: The results or consequences of the death of Christ upon the actors; but I have not time nor space for such a theme, indeed it involves the whole grand completion of God's plans in redemption; yet I cannot leave the subject without a single glance at these results.

To the holy angels, the death of Christ has opened up new themes of study, new sources of the knowledge of God, new employments, new joys, and a new song; nay, we are told that so deeply are they interested, that with each penitent as he returns, saved by the death of Christ, they experience a new joy. Dear to them must ever be the memory of their ministrations to Jesus, in the hour of his humiliation. Over Satan and the fallen angels it triumphs and destroys them; hurls down the pillars of Satan's kingdom, and bruises evermore his head. These fallen spirits, when they had succeeded in inducing the death of Christ, accomplished their own final and certain ruin. The cross of Jesus, even as it stood before them, by the salvation which Jesus wrought for the malefactor at his side, became to their alarmed vision a *throne;* a throne of mercy, down to which even a holy God could descend to pardon and save, and to which even the vilest sinner would dare to come, to receive pardon and eternal life; and so from that

hour has that cross ever been proved to be the meeting place of a reconciled God and saved sinners. One view, by faith, of it has always broken the chains of Satan, and assured the sinner of pardon; and this is the next result of the death of Christ which I mention—its effects on man. The cross, which man in his wickedness raised, has become man's only hope. I cannot perhaps express in more forcible words this effect of the death of Christ than by the touching hymn of Newton:

"I saw one hanging on a tree
In agony and blood,
Who fixed his languid eyes on me,
As near the cross I stood.

"Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seem'd to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

"Alas! I knew not what I did,
But all my tears were vain;
Where could my trembling soul be hid,
For I the Lord had slain?

"A second look he gave, which said:
I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die that thou may'st live.

"Thus while my death thy sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
Such is the mystery of grace,
It seals thy pardon too."

Mark, my hearers, these different results to the *guilty* actors. Satan and man united to put Christ to death, and that death destroys Satan and saves man. Grace—free, sovereign grace!

The effect of the death of Christ on himself, how shall I speak of *it*? He has a name above every other name; all heaven adores him as the Lamb that was slain. He is the theme of everlasting song. *He shall be satisfied.* And God is glorified; all his great and glorious plans will be accomplished, and all heaven, all earth, and all hell will have to yield assent to the testimony given in the angel's song: "Glory to God in the highest."

There are many reflections suggested by our subject, but I must not dwell upon them. I close with a single thought.

The death of Christ, you see, will afford the touchstone of moral character, and affect the destiny of all created beings.

God, Christ, angels, view it in one light; Satan and his fallen companions view it in another. *With whom, dear reader, do you join?* The death of Christ! It glorifies God, and increases the joy of Christ and of angels. It condemns and destroys Satan and his angels. *Again I ask, with whom will you place yourselves?*

Your views and feelings on this subject foretell your char[illegible]

ter and your destiny. The cross of Christ! It is your hope or your despair; your crime and condemnation, or your righteousness and salvation! It will raise you to heaven, or sink you to hell. And you, you yourself must decide which of these effects it shall produce in your case. May God enable you to decide right and wisely! Amen.

SERMON DLXXXIII.

BY REV. DANIEL P. NOYES,

PASTOR OF THE JAY ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HERITAGE.

"Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."—1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

The apostle had been reproving the Corinthian disciples for their partisanship. They had divided into schools. Some were followers of Paul, some of Apollos, and some of Cephas. After having visited such perverse and narrow sentiments with merited censure, the great heart of the apostle flashes forth into the questions—"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?—but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man!"

He reminds them that the apostles, who had "planted" and "watered," were "laborers together with God;" that it was God who gave the increase; that they who had been converted were "God's husbandry," "God's building," and were not to consider themselves as belonging to any man. He tells them that they are the "temple of the living God," and that "God shall destroy" such as "defile" it. Every Christian is the habitation of the Spirit. But, let no man so deceive himself as to be puffed up on this account with the conceit of wisdom; "for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." They ought not, then, to rest their faith in themselves, or in any one of their spiritual guides. Granted that Paul or Apollos is their apostle—their teacher; so is Cephas also. "All things are yours," says Paul. Then, lighting up with this thought and expanding it, he details the several particulars of the text, with glowing energy pressing home upon them the great truth that Christians, heirs

to the inheritance of God, hold all things in fee. 'Tis to this truth that I desire to invite your attention at the present time: "All things are yours; *whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.*"

I. *All Christian teachers, then, belong to every Christian who has access to their teachings.*

The day of sects and partisans is gone. From henceforth, they who are united in Christ are to regard themselves as forming "one body." There may be a "diversity of gifts," or a difference of views, but there is "*one Spirit;*" all are united in one great aim, and one dear hope. The distinction of Gentile, Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, is, in religious things, to be recognized no more. There is to be no longer any alienation through party divisions. No one is to think of himself as primarily a Jew, and then secondarily a Christian—primarily an adherent of Paul, and secondarily of Jesus; but each one is, in the first place, to feel that he is a Christian, and in that fact united to all others who are Christians by an indissoluble bond; then he may, if he pleases, in the second place, belong to a particalar class of Christians, but by no means in such a way as to destroy for him the unity of the "*one body.*" Though a Jew, though a Gentile, though a Scythian, Roman, bond, or free, he is none the less a Christian. He may love to listen to Apollos, but he is not for that reason alienated from Paul, or sundered from Cephas. They, too, are his teachers. Though the eloquence of Apollos touch his heart more deeply, and awaken it to a higher action than that of any other man, yet he is not, therefore, to be an Apollonian, and to yield to the preacher the supremacy which belongs to Christ. Though the burning words of Paul set his soul aglow as none others can, he is by no means to set up Paul in the place of Jesus, or to feel that with other Christian teachers he has nothing to do.

"Who is Paul? and who is Apollos?" They are "planters" and "waterers;" but it is God who creates the growth and "giveth the increase." And are not these men "ministers" of the same gospel, disciples of the same Lord; one in Christ; both "laborers together with God;" neither laboring without God? None of those who, through their preaching, have believed, can be called their "husbandry," *their* "building." No; they have a higher name. They are the "husbandry of God;" a "building of God;" "a temple," each one of them, of the indwelling "Spirit of God." Paul is mine, then, and Cephas too is mine, and Apollos no one can take from me. What if John Bunyan was an Englishman and an Independent; is he the less a Christian? And may not an American learn of him; and must every Episcopalian be excluded from his teachings? What though Fenelon was a Roman Catholic? Is his wisdom the less instructive, in so far as it is wise; or his piety less for our edification, in so far as

it is real and healthful? Does he *not* belong to us, for the reason that he is catalogued in a different class from ours? Nay, every true Christian teacher that the world has seen, of whatever name, if his wisdom teaches us, is ours. He is *ours*. We have a right in him, a property that cannot be extinguished. He is *ours*, and no school or party has any prerogative to exclude our claim by theirs. This party, in so far forth as it is thus exclusive, is unchristian. *All* Christians are "one body;" one, not for any temporal end, not for aggrandizement, not for power, not for show of unity, or for splendor; not for the sake of the majesty of the oneness; but in ever-during *reality* are they one; in spiritual, not temporal relations; for spiritual, not temporal ends; for eternity and God, not for time and show.

"All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas;" whether Augustine, Athanasius, Origen; whether Luther, Calvin or Pascal; Wesley, Zinzendorf, Edwards, Coleridge, or Chalmers; "*all* are yours;" all Christian teachers, and the whole church, the assembly of the saints, the great congregation of the good.

This, in substance, is what Paul said to the Corinthians, and this he still declares to us. These disciples had been narrowing their hearts by an exclusive attachment to a single individual, and his doctrine; and were this spirit to be cherished in the churches, they would come at last to be cursed with a bigotry and a jealousy, destructive of the noblest traits and the very essential principles of the Christian life. It was one part of the mission of Christ into the world to bring about the dissolution of all party and sectarian bonds, and to unite the whole undivided humanity in one beautiful and immortal body. The Jew was no longer to regard himself as the one peculiar favorite of God, the only son, the sole heir; nor might any Christian permit himself to become the disciple of an apostle, or the partisan of an orator and teacher. Having once by his union with Christ become a citizen in the kingdom of God, he was not expected straightway to expatriate his heart from this glorious kingdom, and narrow down the affections which belonged to the whole to the miserable limits of his little native village or province. His patriotism, it was expected, would light up in view of the whole. The whole boundless empire is his; not the vale merely in which he first sees the light, nor the low hills that make the valley, though upon his childish eye they rise with mountain grandeur, in oppressive sublimity and overwhelming loveliness. The Christian who finds himself born into a sect, is not to bestow the fulness of his heart upon that, or upon the good, great men whose labors founded, or whose lives have adorned it. He is to remember the glorious company "that no man can number," whose voices rise "like the voice of many waters," and roll like

mighty thunders; he is to remember "the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom" given unto Him before whom "all knees bow," and in which his sect is but an obscure encampment that will vanish at morning light, or, at best, a poor village of clay and thatch, far removed from the metropolis, and endured only for the season. This temporary encampment, this humble village, is not his country, his father-land, his *home-land.* The eternal kingdom into which he has been born, in the new birth, is far other than these, and worthier of his love.

The Christian who finds himself the convert and the admirer of some great religious teacher, is not to pin his faith upon that good man's word; is not to break the precious box of his heart's dearest love even upon his honored head. The eloquent preacher, the wise and gentle pastor, is not the captain of his salvation; is not the *Lord* before whom his knee should bow. There is no such name given under heaven whereby he is to be saved. In bestowing his faith upon the one only name, in yielding his love to the divine heart of Jesus Chist, he is freed from all narrower service, from all bondage to human leaders; and whomsoever he may follow, he follows but as the disciple of the Lord; to whomsoever he may be attached in love, he is not excluded from loving others; and whatever guide he may call his *own*, he is permitted to feel that all others are his likewise, could he but use them. The whole church, with all its learning and spiritual wisdom, the earthly kingdom of God in the greatness of its power and the splendor of its wonderful destiny, its immortal and glorious Head, these all are his. My brethren, "All things are yours."

II. "THE WORLD," *as well as the Church.* Such is the declaration of the apostle. What can he mean? How can this be true?

In the first place, it is plain that the apostle did *not* mean to say *that all things belonged to the Christians in fee simple under human law.* They held but a small part of the universe by this tenure. The lands and the towns, the mines and the gardens, the fleets and palaces, the stores of rich metals and woven stuffs, the pomps and elegancies, the grandeur and the beauty; these possessions, most valuable in the general estimation of mankind, were not the property of the disciples of Christ under any human law. They could not rest upon the purple couches, they could not eat at the gilded tables, they might not ride in the glancing chariots, or wear the scarlet robes or the golden crowns. The multitude of servants did not come and go at their bidding; nor could they do all that they would with the things of this world which were their own.

These possessions were, secondly, *not even theirs to use.* They had not a *life interest* in them. They could not control the "usufruct." The gardens, and parks, and mansions were barred against them. The rich viands and costly habiliments were pro-

tected from their touch by the whole force of the law. Nor, again, could they *bequeath* either of these rights to their descendants. Their children would inherit no more control over these things than they themselves possessed. Paul well knew all this, and yet he says to them: "*All things are yours; the world.*" The *world* as God made it, and as man has adorned it; the world—the privilege of its rivers and oceans, uses of land and water, the airs of its mountains and of sunny valleys, its wholesome fruits, its medicinal herbs, its quarries of beautiful stone, its mines of gold, its store of gems, its thronging tribes of life; the *world*—its dignities and splendors, its power, its honors, says the apostle, *all are yours.* "How? How?" it is asked. I reply, 1st: *These are ours, my Christian friends, to enjoy at least in the enjoyment of others.*

Jesus Christ, we read, sought not to please himself. The true disciple of Christ, then, is not selfish. He does not seek to appropriate the whole world to his private use. Were it in his hands, completely at his control, the use that he would make of it would be to give it to a great multitude to enjoy, as God has done. He wants it not for himself. Even what he desires he seeks not for himself alone, but as well for others also. What he *has*, he devotes not to his private good exclusively, but a part of it to the good of man, and all, under some form, to the glory of God. The true Christian, therefore, looking around upon the wondrous wealth of this world, and beholding it divided into many parts for as many sentient beings, is satisfied in the accomplishment of his own wish, rejoices in beholding their joy, and turns with new gratitude to God, in the ever fresh recognition of his bounteous goodness; and none but the Christian heart can do this. The world is *ours.* For us the birds sing and the lambs play. For us the clouds range their battalions in the sky, and flocks and herds feast, and rest, and frolic on the mountains. For us the winds blow, and the rivers run, and the sea claps his hundred hands, and lifts up his voice upon the shore. Unto us the sunrise and the stars are given, day and night, seed time and harvest. We enjoy them all. And for us, too, as well as for themselves, the world is peopled with the thronging multitudes of mankind. In their happiness is ours too; and we would live that we may make both greater, while, in doing this, we are rendering glory unto God. We envy not him who rejoices in his home among sublime mountains, the inhabitant of fruitful valleys, or the lord of princely palaces. It is for us that men build themselves stately mansions. These splendors please our eye, and they are grateful to our heart; for they speak of prosperity; they tell of the gratification of human hopes, of the accomplishment of cherished purposes; they are images of strength, and they make the country look athletic and glad. Double your wealth, and you shall multiply our joy, if you spend your wealth without sin. We

can get good from every thing but sin. The state of the Christian's heart prepares him for the enjoyment of the whole creation of God, and of the good providence of God, in all the happiness and glory of man.

But we must not delay upon these things. This is not the most important sense in which the text is true. But, 2dly: The world is ours, not for *our temporal happiness, but for our spiritual and eternal benefit.* To this end chiefly was the world made, that it might become a temporary habitation of immortal spirits, their school of preparation for the secure peace, the full beatitude, and the endless progress of the eternal state. The parts innumerable of this immense system of the universe all harmonize in this purpose, contributing each a share to this end. As in the living body, then, each member derives some advantage from every other, so in this great universe, which is all alive with the presence of God, every individual soul ought to receive some furtherance from every part of the immense whole; and he does, unless self-excluded, self-cursed; unless by his own act placed under the ban of the empire, excommunicated from its unity, so that the good creatures of God cannot any more give him food and comfort. The world, by original appointment, and the chief design of God, contributes to the furtherance of the Christian on his way to heaven. Upon this theme, however, I may not now delay; and therefore only remark briefly, that the material universe is all of it either for the Christian's comfort, instruction, or trial: and trial, my hearers, is the instructor of the heart: it is the tonic of the debilitated spirit, the sanctification of the perverted will, the fire of the change through which the soul escapes from the pit of sin, and rises purified up toward God. "*All things are yours;*" whether the church, the world, or,

III. LIFE.

Can you tell me what influence the days here spent shall have upon the great time to come? What shall be the final purport and result of your present experiences? What effect upon your soul, what effect upon your circumstances, shall these present scenes, these labors, these leisures, these sufferings, these joys, these sins, this struggling against sin—all; what effects shall these finally result in? Good, or bad? Is this life YOURS? Are you quite sure it is your friend, and that it will work you benefit? Is it *yours*, and can you by-and-by call in the investments that you are here making, and reclaim them all with accumulated interest?

In early youth, we were neglected, perhaps, by those whose duty it was to have instructed and warned us, and we fell into errors and sins. In early maturity, our own passions and foolish vanity led us astray. In middle life, evil habits have fastened upon us with so strong hold, that we almost despair of victory,

and give ourselves up to the mercy of the current. Now, who shall assure us that all these things shall not be of permanent injury to us? We look back upon the past; we see that much of it was blameworthy, and much more, perhaps, was unfortunate. Now who shall insure to us that these sins and misfortunes shall not work us evil and only evil, for ever and for ever? that our life, in all these particulars, has not been worse than thrown away? that so far as these matters affect us, our case is not hopeless, utterly and for everlasting? Who shall assure us of this? You have been greatly prospered, it may be. Now we all know that prosperity is dangerous; more dangerous to most than adversity. It is the voice of all time—Beware of success! When you triumph, fear! when you are at ease, be *watchful!* when exalted, *humble* yourself! *You* have been greatly prospered. Answer now to your own soul, and tell unto it what shall be the final result of this prosperity upon its character and its state. Are you able to say whether it shall be good or bad?

You have been broken down with adversity. Sorrows have come upon you like a flood. They smote you, they stunned your senses, they broke your spirit. What shall be the result of this on your eternal state? Or, a silent, incurable, secret grief has been gnawing, half your days, in your heart's core. No one has known it; you have even sought to deny it to yourself. Still there it has been, there it is. It saps your strength; it aggravates your troubles; it takes off the edge from all your joys, enfeebles your hope, and tinges remembrance with gloom. Your life has been without bloom and fragrance. It has no glow, no bounding energy, no deep and full content; it is a song in the minor key, with discords in the harmony. Now answer unto your soul, and tell unto it whether all this faintness, this pallor and gloom shall at last be for its benefit. Shall the soul be any the richer for this long impoverishment? any the stronger for this protracted debility? any the more serene and glad for this long eclipse of trouble and sadness? *Is this life* YOURS? Every reflective mind must have been troubled at times with such questionings as these. It makes the heart sink to recall the disadvantages with which we have had to contend here, and to feel that they may never be compensated for; to review all the follies which have stained our lives, and to think that, *perhaps*, these follies have made an indelible impression on our life. Above all, it fills us with anguish to remember our wilful transgressions, to see all our faults, to know, to acknowledge even to the very depth of our souls, that we were blameworthy, and then to have the dreadful thought come over us—*Is it possible* that these stains, these scars, this deep dishonor, this self-inflicted *curse* can ever be taken away; and that we shall be as good, and as happy, and as strong, and as fair, as though we had never sinned? Is it POSSIBLE

that our life, being such as it undeniably is, can be OURS FOR GOOD—and only good! Is it our property? or is it not rather our debt? Is it our friend? or not rather our enemy? Oh the misery of a lost life! Oh the despair of feeling that IT IS GONE! all GONE!—in vain! worse than in vain!—that this blessed mortal life, given that it might be such a joy, and the seed of so much greater joy, the fountain of an immortal river, full of blessing—that it is all squandered! gone! beyond recall—gone! *and no hope!* Is this life *yours*, for your good, or is it not? Answer to your own soul.

Saith the apostle to his fellow Christians: "*All things are yours; whether the church or the world, or life.*" My Christian friends, "LIFE" IS YOURS; life in all its experiences of misfortune and success, of affliction and joy, of sin and holiness; all is *yours*, for your good. The very wrath of man shall sing an anthem to the praise of God. The very sins of the Christian soul, *repented* of, shall prove a new bulwark of strength, a new foundation for beauty, and honor, and blessing for evermore. These present afflictions "shall work out for you a *far more exceeding*, even an *eternal weight* of glory." For consider, trouble and grief are essential elements of your necessary spiritual food. They are strong meat, indeed, and unfit therefore for weak and sickly constitutions; and accordingly it is only the healthful heart, the Christian heart, which is fitted to bear them, and is able to get new strength from them. Unto all others, affliction is an evil, except it prove the means of turning them to God. But the Christian is able to say, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" He finds that his soul had been drugged by opiates, and that its senses were not awake to the most glorious realities of his state; that its vision of spiritual truths had been exceedingly obscure; that its estimate of the value of worldly objects had been false. But he feels now that a new sense is opening within him; that the veil which conceals realities—and every thing in this life wears its veil—is growing thinner; that the countenance of his Father, God, bends over him with clearer light, with a new tenderness of love. Having had one of the bonds that attach his heart to earth rudely snapped, and having been made to feel, as never before, the extreme uncertainty of earthly hopes. and his own utter helplessness, he has cast himself with greater fulness of surrender into the arms of God, and he trusts with a warmer, more confiding, freer love. Sorrowful but strong, dejected and yet glad, hopeless and full of hope, weary in spirit from sore struggles, yet more fearless and more firm of heart than ever before, he returns to the conflicts of life, with a new harness on, a stronger and broader shield, and a sword of better temper. He can say, even with heart ready to burst, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*" Till we can gauge the fulness of joy which is at the right hand of God, till we discover an arithmetic by which

to calculate the value of holiness, we may not attempt to say *how* good it is to us that we have been afflicted. "Blessed are they that mourn," said our Saviour, "*for they shall be comforted.*" *Yes!* "*they shall be* COMFORTED!" What significance in these words! Those who mourn shall HAVE COMFORT. We do not all have comfort. Some of us know what it is for the spirit never to be at peace, never at rest. Some of us know what it is for the soul always to have some disquiet, some fear, some anguish, secret perhaps, and not violent, yet enough to spoil our *rest.* "These shall *have comfort.*" It is not said that they shall have no discomfort. That were altogether too much to promise for this life. But there shall be moments when, with a full consciousness of their whole state, looking before, and looking after, they shall *be at peace—they shall have comfort.* Calmly searching the whole chequered scene of their visible existence, with an eye for sins, with a recollection of misfortune and of suffering; surveying with an impartial glance the present, with its uncertainties and its dangers; peering forward into the future with frank gaze, discerning there shadowy forms of evil, as well as the brightness of prosperity and gladness; thus the soul, sitting in its chamber, and looking round about itself, seeing, feeling all, is nevertheless *at peace.* It has found "comfort"—"*comfort.*" Having been in the midst of the furnace, and having escaped therefrom without the smell of fire upon its garments, neither the remembrance nor the anticipation of such scenes is able to do more than to fill it with solemnity and tearful, joyful stillness of faith. IT IS "COMFORTED." It has seen God, and caught immortal peace from the sight. Behold, "All things are yours; whether the Church, or the world, or life, or death."

IV. DEATH is yours.

My hearers, I proclaim but what is written. The apostle said to the Corinthian Christians, "Death is yours." He undeniably said this to them on the ground that they were Christians. On this same ground, then, I repeat it to-day in your hearing. The privilege is allowed me of saying to every Christian soul. Soul! thou art acknowledged of the Father, as a child of heaven; Soul! thou art an heir of the inheritance of the sons of God. All things are yours—whether the church or the world, whether life or death. Thou hast entered the company of those for whose good the universe was made; and its whole plan and every detail of structure, and the entire method of its management in all its particulars, shall in some way conduce to your good. All is yours—for blessing. This universe of God is a great animated being, and God is the life of it. Every part of this being that partakes of this eternal life, every part that is in union with God, partakes in the good of the whole: "all things work together for good unto them that love God." What is death? 'Tis a change! yes, death *is a change!* Now this change, for those who love God, is a change *for the better.*

Christians, *death is yours.* What is death? I stood by the bedside of a pale sufferer who had been wasted by protracted illness. His cheek has grown wrinkled, and his look, full of affection, was tinged with anxiery. "Good-bye, good-bye!" said he; "God bless you!" and a cloud passed over his countenance. He turned his head away, and covered his face, while for an instant his frame trembled. What was it? It was the faint distant *shadow of death.* It was a thought of the passing away of life. In that instant of time, there entered his mind rapidly the images of all the dear joys of life—home, wife, child, brother, sister, gentle, faithful friends—a great and noble company of them. He joyed in their joy, they in his. His life had not reached its meridian. His spring-time was but lately over, and now the rich summer-time, and the quiet autumn to which he might without presumption have looked forward, are clouded over. The shadow of death—it did not yet *rest* upon him. It came from afar, and momentarily cast a faint shade upon his heart.

Dear, dear are the ties of earth. Why should they not be? They are the only ones that we have known. In experience they are our all. *Our all!* Do you know what that word means—*all?* It may be something very small and very poor; yet if it is your all, then for *you* it is neither poor nor small. The poor widow cast her mite into the treasury. It was *all that she had;* and Jesus said that she had cast in more than any of the rich. A rude hut in a miserable suburb is burned to the ground with all its contents. Why such lamentations? Why such sobs and tears? And the poor woman, with her half-clad children clinging to her, replies, "It was *all* I had." You go into a house of mourning. It is in twilight at noonday; in stillness and gloom unbroken, save by the moans of one who refuses to be comforted. Wherefore this depth of anguish; this unavailing, dreary, hopeless, desperate grief? Ah! it was an *only* child; it was "her all!" Draw nigh now unto the dying bed. Death has not come, and is not very near; but he casts his shadow, and the hovering of his wing is seen in the distance. Wherefore this inflexible, unearthly solemnity, as if the face had forgotton to smile, and was cut in thin marble? Wherefore the wild flush and the quick convulsion? Is it not his *all* that he is leaving? Home, friends, hopes, all which he has, or has desired, all wonted occupations, all dear associations, all sweet communions, all pleasant imaginings, all substantial blessings within the range of experience? *Dear, dear* are the ties that unite us to this world. They began to twine round the tender heart of childhood; even so early, *they* penetrated its sensitive texture, and laid firm hold of the substance of the soul; and ever since they have been enlarging their cords, and strengthening their fibres, and pushing their tendrils in, till every heart-

string is a tie that fastens upon some earthly object, some friend, some possession, some memory or some hope.

Now then, one day, after weeks, perhaps months, of sickness, with the utmost consideration and sympathy, a loved friend seems yet to be talking very strangely! His words seem to imply that you are not to expect to recover! you "cannot live," he says. "Not live!" How terrible and triumphant leaps that dreadful vision upon the faint and startled heart of him who is not prepared to die! It's all gone—his all! Nearer, nearer, nearer, in imagination, he sees the day coming; the day of utter darkness; the day of the final separation; dreadful hour of the last change!

The natural heart, with only natural lights, with the conviction of sin, and without the knowledge of God, has no strength to bear such a reality as this. The *shadow* of it, distant and faint, makes the soul shake, chills the heart's core. Not so is it with the Christian heart. Death comes to him, not as a horrid phantasm, nor even as a stranger. Though he has never met the solemn angel before, he has often seen his shadow, and heard the rustling of his wings. He hath oft in the mind's eye beheld him, has communed with him in his heart, and has known him long as a friend; a serious friend indeed, and yet a gentle friend, with serene and godlike look, awful in loveliness. Death is the Christian's friend. They have held sweet converse together; and they will meet as equals, both the servants of God, loving to do his will. Death is not terrible to those who love the will of God, and who prefer the Divine wisdom to the wishes of their own foolish heart. Death is not terrible to him who has walked with God here, and who has known Jesus. He may come unexpectedly, and his cold hand may be laid suddenly upon the brow, and it may be very hard to part so from the loved ones here; yet the difference of time is not of so much consequence. It would have been pleasant to have had a few years more in the earthly home, to have watched over the welfare of children a little longer, to have wrought out a few more long-cherished plans; but still there would be loved ones to leave at any time, and plans unaccomplished, dear hopes unattained. "If it be the will of the Father, then," says the Christian in his heart, "not my will, but thine, O God, be done." Tenderly, solemnly, tearfully, with holy peace and unfaltering faith, the light of blessed memories and of more blessed hopes playing upon his brow, wreathing his lips, he bids adieu to the dear ones who gather around his bedside, folds his hands, and breathes his last breath on earth.

Christians! "All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or *things present*, or *things to come*." They are all a part of your Father's estate; they all are a part of your inheritance. "All things shall work together for your good." *Time*, with its labor, its sorrow, its sin,

its remorse, its disappointments, its joys—all the gifts of the world, good and bad, all the experiences of life, of what complexion soever—ALL are yours. Time is given to you for your good. It is your servant. It brings blessings and pours them into your cup. It is YOURS; appointed, regulated for your benefit, and through that, for the glory of God. When *time* shall be no more, then comes eternity, immense, boundless, sublime, inexhaustible; and he pours his richness into your lap; you enter into fulness of good, of holiness and joy; and as your nature grows deeper and broader and stronger, so that you can contain more, and bear more, still it is the *fulness* of good, of holiness and of joy.

"All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Such is the gradation of dignity and dominion. The wor d was made for man. Time was given unto him for his inheritance. He hath dominion over all visible things here below, but not an independent authority over himself. Mankind is destined to be united in one body in Christ Jesus, who is "*the head;*" and over *all* is God—unapproachable, inconceivable, the beginning and the end, whence all things do spring, unto whom all return. All our little rills pour their tides of honor or of joy into the still ocean of Divine glory and of eternal bliss. "He hath made all things for himself," making all for the good of those who love his holiness, and whom he loves. "ALL THINGS ARE YOURS."

THE TIME OF NEED.

OUR whole journey from the cradle to the grave is one perpetual lesson of dependence upon God. He must follow us with the exertions of his power and the munificence of his goodness, or life has no value. When he made man, he made a creature whose time of need would be as constant as his breath, who could not dispense with the attendance of Divine kindness and care for a single moment, and who therefore, in his blessings enjoyed, should be a perpetual witness of the succor and aid of his Maker. * * *

There is a peculiar power in advanced age to search out and reveal the necessities of our being. Youth is passed; manhood is passed; withered and trembling limbs, a bent form, furrowed cheeks, a broken accent, obscured vision, incapacity for action, the total languor of life's once vigorous and bounding current, exhibit our nature in the last stage of decay. Then man totters with his own weakness; the almond tree is in blossom, and even

the grasshopper a burthen. The sports of childhood, the gayeties of youth, and the sterner pursuits of manhood, have alike become obsolete. Old age not only wants the offering of filial gratitude to nurse its feebleness, and pay the debt of former service; but it more wants the consolations, comforts and hopes which come from God, to abate the rigors of winter and sweeten life's close. There are peculiar necessities which creep over us when our years become threescore and ten, and from which the grace of God is the only remedy. Man is then about done with this world, and what he most wants is a good hope for another.

And what shall be said of dying? How weak and powerless is man in death! Who then will be his comforter? Who soothe his alarms, and bid him look undaunted on the tomb? When death cannot be shunned, then the victim asks to die in peace. Deny him this last boon, and how extreme the agony of dying! The valley of the shadow of death, without the comforts of religion, is a region of terror. Those have found it so who have tried the sad experiment. Their groans and tears, their keen regrets, their pangs of conscience, and fears of coming wrath, are the witnesses of a former folly, and the evidence of a present want. Death will bring into action all our resources, and, if we are not anchored in God, deliver us to the pelings of despair. Dying is stern and serious business: it makes the world look poor, reduces to the insignificance of a cipher the highest values of time, and discovers to us what feeble creatures we are, and how great is the importance of God's friendship. It is "the last of earth."

How strangely millions live! So dependent, so needy, so full of wants, and yet so careless to secure the favor of God! They are invited to the throne of grace, not only to obtain mercy, but also to find grace to help in time of need. It is perfectly certain that such times will arise in their history. No human foresight can shun them, and no earthly power is sufficient to meet them; and yet, alas! man too often treats himself as if he had no interests to lose or save, as if immortality were a fiction, as if God were a being of no importance. The favor he most needs, he is least likely to seek; that which he least needs, he is most anxious to gain.—*N. Y. Evangelist.*

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 11, Vol. XXVI.] NOVEMBER, 1852. [Whole No. 311.

SERMON DLXXXIV.

BY THE REV. JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FIFTH AVENUE AND NINETEENTH ST.

New York City.

ALL IS YOURS.

"All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3 : 21—23.

Our troubles arise, in great measure, from our ignorance of what God intends for us. He means that his church shall be greater, purer, and happier, than it has ever conceived. And all our discontent, repinings, and griefs, would be at once suppressed, if the Spirit were to reveal to us the things which God has prepared for them that love him. Especially would contentions among brethren vanish, if they could only see the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. This is the train of thought which gives occasion to the passage now before us.

The apostle Paul had founded a church at Corinth, and remained with them eighteen months. When he had been some time absent he heard bad news from the beloved Corinthians. There were contentions among them, as he heard from some of the house of Chloe. They were setting up one teacher or apostle against another. The banners of their factions bore the names of these leaders. Their cries were: 'I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.' The apostle was astonished and afflicted. 'Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' In his grief, he is constrained to address them as yet 'carnal.' "For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal?" He reminds them of

the true place of ministers. "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. For we are laborers together with God; ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

The plain truth is, there is a tendency in fallen men, even in the church, to pervert their own blessings, and to make the ministry itself an occasion of rivalry and strife. God has marked this with his displeasure. He has never given countenance in his word to any undue exaltation of his servants; and when such extravagant fondness is coupled with pride and schismatic separation, it is offensive in his sight.

The wisdom of the apostle is manifested in his mode of correcting this error. He draws away their attention from the servants to the Master, and from instruments to the infinite mercies which they convey. He seems amazed at their perverse disputings. It is as if, in a desert, a company who had come upon a fountain of overflowing living water, should sit down by the brink, and neglect the refreshing spring, and spend their strength in contending about the comparative value of the poor earthen vessels. As though he had said: We who minister are indeed your servants for Jesus' sake. Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. We bring you a treasure; but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. Learn not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. Look from the frail vessel to the treasure. Consider your vast inheritance, and rise above these insignificant incidents. "Therefore, let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." Such is the connection of ideas in this interesting context.

Doctrine: *The highest privileges, hopes, and blessings are given to believers, because of their union with Christ, and God the Father by him.* We may follow the spring into the place of the stream, or we may trace up the stream to the spring it is the latter method which I now propose, inviting you to consider these propositions: I. Christ is God's; II. Ye are Christ's; III. All things are yours. And how would our hearts leap for joy, if we could comprehend all the glorious reality of these truths!

I. *Christ is God's.* Here you behold the first golden link, taking hold of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is the sacred and eternal fount of all our mercies. "Salvation is of God." The Godhead, without immediate respect to persons, may be intended; and then the Mediator as God-man,

standing between divinity and our fallen race is distinguished from God, as absolutely considered. Or the Almighty Father may be intended; and then the Second Person of the adorable Trinity is held up to our view, as uniting himself with manhood, and covenanting with our race. In either view, we behold Jesus our Redeemer standing before us, and laying his hands on us for good, and pointing with gracious invitation to the august summit, namely, to the inaccessible throne of Jehovah. This he may well do; for 'Christ is God's.' The name of *Christ* is a term of office, being the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Messiah; the corresponding English word being Anointed. In undertaking for us, Jesus receives the holy oil, in a prophetic anointing, a priestly anointing, and a kingly anointing. He discharges the functions of all three, in accomplishing redemption; and his name as Mediator is Christ. But none of these things could he do, unless he were possessed of a divine title. He would never bring us nigh, if he were not eternally nigh himself. But this work he can fully carry on, for 'Christ is God's.'

He is the Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father; a relation which we cannot comprehend, but which is positively revealed. The filial name is one of nearness and tenderness, even on earth; and we know not but that God has made it so that we might by this type the better understand the connection of the heavenly Persons. Christ is the First Begotten, and (in strictness of speech) the Only Begotten. Earthly love, when it mounts highest, is a poor, weak, flickering, half-quenched flame; but O who shall tell us what is meant by heavenly love—divine love—love before all ages—love without all bounds—everlasting, infinite, incomprehensible, of the Father to the Son—of God to God! a love moving on the scale of divine immensity, and acting itself forth in harmony with the divine bliss of the ever-blessed Potentate! Who shall tell us of the waves of infinite complacency and affection, each of which is an ocean, flowing and re-flowing through the unknown ages about the throne of God and the Lamb! Then should we understand the dimensions of the saying, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only *begotten Son*." Christ is the "beloved Son," in whom the adorable Father is evermore "well-pleased." "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands." Nay, his will is, "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." "He that hath seen Him, hath seen the Father; for he and the Father are one."

But this Son of the Highest, in the prosecution of his work, emptied himself of his manifested glory, and bound himself to the yoke, for our sakes. It is impossible to get a glimpse of

him *as Christ*, as anointed mediator, without looking at this. It was not merely God coming down to man: this he did in paradise. It was not merely God anointing man: this he did in the prophets. It was not merely God indwelling: this he did in the holy of holies. But it was God becoming man. It was divinity incarnate. If there is a sentence worthy of being sounded with all the harmonies of earth and all the music of the heavens, and of being sweetly and sublimely chanted, with all the pathos and all the triumph of celestial voices, it is that sentence, *The Word was made Flesh!*

He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Herein is the love of God manifested, that he sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. For our sakes indeed it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to shame, and to accumulate our guilt, and to lay our chastisement and curse: yet never was he more pleasing unto God, than when he was obeying unto death. And at that moment, when the earth trembled and the heavens moaned, and the Son of the Highest, having undergone hours of ignominy and torture, was hanging between heaven and earth, a ghastly, bloody corpse, the depth of humiliation and the extreme of curse, at that moment (if ever) might the word be taken up in heaven, and carried from chorus to chorus of all the angelic people, Christ is God's!

But death could not hold him. Heaven was longing for him. He burst the stony obstacles of the sepulchre. He ascended on high, leading captivity captive. "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet; sing praises to God, sing praises." "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place." The gates, the everlasting doors, have lifted up their heads, and the king of glory hath gone in. He sitteth at the right hand of God; he ever liveth to make intercession for us. God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. There he sits, expecting till all his enemies be made his footstool. It is Messiah, it is Christ, it is our Redeemer that there sits. And what he asks, he hath. He cannot ask amiss, he cannot ask in vain. His lightest wish were enough to rend the universe. His breath of intercession is mighty as that which formed all worlds. From that right hand of majesty, he says, as he extends the golden sceptre, "Believe me, that I am in the Father and the Father in me." "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." If on earth, then surely in heaven, he may say, "I know that thou hearest me always." Thus contemplating the first link of this connexion we may say with Paul, Christ is God's. The great problem which vexes man, is,

how to approach God. Now it is solved. We have no conception of such love, but it has accomplished this ineffable union.

II. *Ye are Christ's.* This is the second particular in the golden chain that binds us to God. You have seen what God is to Christ; now see what Christ is to you. As near as God is to Christ, so near is Christ to his people. We shall know this better one day; as he has said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Ye are Christ's! This is enough, if you fully reach its meaning, and comprehend who and what Christ is. Ye are his, because God made you over unto him, in a covenant before all worlds. The record of your names is in the book of life; and it is called His book, and it is the Lamb's "book of life from the foundation of the world." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me:" "of all that he hath given me shall I lose nothing." If you have in you the marks of his people, then were you his before you were in being; as contemplated in the everlasting covenant. Nay, not one step could be taken towards the restoration of sinners, until they were contemplated in Christ as their covenanting-head and surety and representative.

Ye are Christ's because he has purchased you. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; and what a price! the sufferings and blood and sin-bearing of a Divine Mediator. If any thing can, this makes you his property. Every drop from those sacred veins marks you out as belonging to him forever. Every commemoration of it, at the Lord's table, renews your sense of the glorious connexion. We love that which has cost us much; we are most tenderly attached to those for whom we have suffered, and Christ never looks on his people without the remembrance that he has died for them. What can be a better foundation of a claim to property in any, than dying for them? Ye are Christ's, then, by the depth of his agonies, and the price of his atonement. And since He remembers it, for your sake, O be persuaded, on your part, to remember it for his sake. Say therefore, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Ye are Christ's, because he has taken you into union with himself. This is not a fabulous or a metaphorical union. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." What the head and the heart is to the body, that is Christ to you. The trunk of the vine is not more united to the branches, nor the root and fatness of the olive tree to the leaves and fruit, than Christ is to you. Your nature is now made to partake of his nature; your life is a product of his

life. Your life is hid with Christ in God. You are crucified with Christ, nevertheless you live, yet not ye, but Christ liveth in you. All this is true, just so surely as you have believed. Faith opens the vital communication, and provides the channel, whereby the life of Christ flows into and merges one life, just as the juices of the graft and the stock become inseparably mingled. This union is maintained by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in believers, as the Spirit of Christ; and it is often delightfully felt by believers, when the soul is graciously persuaded that it is Christ's; saying "My Beloved is mine, and I am his."

The problem, (we may say again) is now solved: we have learnt how man may approach unto God. Christ is God's, and we are Christ's; we are therefore not only Christ's but God's; dear not only to the intercessor, but to the Majesty with whom he intercedes. The bond that ties us to the Cross, ties us to the throne. Yes, beloved, Christ's people are God's people. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father." "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." You are now brought nigh to God, even by his well-beloved Son, who introduces you as his own. Hear how he prays, just after the first Eucharist, and just before his last suffering: hear, and understand that ye are Christ's: John xvii. 10, "They are thine, and all thine are mine." "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." Do you doubt whether you are included in that ancient prayer? listen again: "Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

If then ye are Christ's, what may you not expect? Standing in this relation to God, and through the intervention of one thus dear to him, you have a foundation for the widest hopes. The Church is safe, and it is sure of unspeakable blessings. Ye are of Christ's own body. Trembling soul! downcast unclean, self-condemned publican! look up to that face that was marred for thee, and believe its glance of unutterable benignity and compassion!

III. *All things are yours.* This seems vast—almost incredible; but what could we expect less? He who has Christ, has all. It is a universe of privilege. If He who gives the greater will give the less, and if he who gives the whole will surely give the part, then He who gives the infinite, will most surely give the subordinate and temporary, yea all things. The argument is one which you may apply to ten thousand

cases of varied want and desire and fear. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him, also freely give us all things!"

The apostle begins with the *ministry;* not because it is the greatest of these good things, but because he happened to be speaking of ministers, and because he was grieved at their overweening and injurious admiration of the earthen vessel, and their jealous contentions for one servant above another. "Do you glory in men?" says he. O astonishing perverseness of folly! What! know you not that the greatest of teachers and apostles are but a part of your inheritance? Name no longer Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; it is a grief to us, and a disparagement to Christ. Did I ever baptize any of you into my own name; nay, except one family, did I baptize at all? "for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." And that gospel makes over to you all things, the ministry included. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man." The truth, therefore, which he presses, is this. The ministry is all for your sakes, and a part of that boundless wealth which is included in the covenant between God and your Surety, Christ Jesus the Lord. It is hardly necessary to add, that the very same argument applies to all the means of grace, and all the arrangements of the church. The constitution of God's house, with all its officers; the holy Scriptures, and all that illustrates and applies them; the preaching of the Gospel, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the throne of grace, the water of baptism, the table of the Lord; they are yours, for Christ's sake, and because ye are his.

But holy Paul could not rest here; having opened such a vista of blessings, he must expatiate; it is characteristic of his manner. Despising petty rules of unity, he never comes in sight of the great ocean of grace, that he does not launch upon it. Not content to say, 'ministers are yours, I am yours,' he adds, 'and far more also—the *world*, the world is yours!' It is a great name; to the worldling it is everything, it is his universe; to you, it is but part. As unsanctified and abused, it is under a curse, it is a temptation and a snare, and he who loves it is the enemy of God; but to you who are Christ's, the world is subjected, and all its stings are taken away. Your Redeemer did not pray that you should be taken out of the world, but that you should be kept from the evil that is in the world. And more than this, it is yours because it only stands until God's purposes concerning you shall be accomplished. As the theatre of Satan's seeming conquest, it might have sunk down into perdition at the fall; but it was reserved to be the theatre of the great restoring action; to be

sanctified by the incarnation, to be trodden by the blessed feet of Jesus, to be bedewed by divine blood, to entomb in its embrace the body which never saw corruption, and to witness the triumphs of the latter glory. It is yours, with all it contains, its treasures, realms, dominions, monarchies and resources; the world is yours.

But he rises; there is yet more: *life and death!* words of great import; they are yours. Whether you live, you live unto the Lord, and whether you die, you die unto the Lord; living and dying ye are the Lord's, are Christ's, and Christ is God's. All the powers of life—your birth, progress, and term of continuance—all the acts and events of this pilgrimage are included in the gracious plan. And even Death, which you so much dread, instead of being excepted, is expressly named and included; it shall come as God chooses, and when he chooses; it shall come as a friend; it shall come as a deliverer, to unlock your prison, and restore the keys to him who governs death and the unseen world. It is included in the covenant arrangement, and carries not one legitimate terror to such as are Christ's; for he hath destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and hath delivered them who were all their life-time subject to bondage through fear of death. By naming at one and the same utterance, both life and death, the apostle teaches us to regard them with a holy indifference, himself setting us the example when he says, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death: for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain; what to choose I wot not. I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Observe how the name of Christ sweetens every successive mention of dying, to one who is Christ's! Yea, death itself is yours!

What is it possible for an apostle to add to the inventory of covenant blessings, after this exhaustive statement? To cut off all misgiving, and cause the cup of salvation to run over the brim, he adds one comprehensive and concluding phrase, '*or things present, or things to come.*" This life and the other. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. The present life is yours, because it is Christ's, and he gives it to you. All that can be gained and enjoyed of real good in this life, is yours. All things work together for good to them that love God. Your very pains, wants, vexations, weaknesses, fears, temptations, enemies—all are yours. Can you dare to be discontented ot disheartened under such a grant? It must be because you do not understand the covenant. If God be for us, who can be against us! Are you poor? I tell you,

you are rich; "for he hath said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." Are you sorrowful? Your light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Ah, brethren, attend to the expression "a moment;" things present are but for a moment; and therefore it is that the apostle hastens on to say, not merely things present, but things to come. Human existence on this earth is but the first momentary infant breath of life. See! all heaven is before you! Things to come! What things, he durst not, he could not say. True, he had been caught up into paradise, and had heard somewhat, but they were words 'unspeakable,' which it is neither possible nor lawful for man to utter. "Things to come are yours: *heaven* is yours;" and no wonder, for ye are Christ's, and he is the centre of heaven. Where he is, his people shall be. Revert to his sacramental prayer. He lifts his eyes and prays: "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me (i. e. who are Christ's) be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (i. e. Christ is God's.) Eternity, in all its inconceivable heights, depths, lengths, breadths, is yours! What then can befall you, to your injury or loss? Nothing, unless it can make you cease to be Christ's. And would you know the security of your tenure? "I am persuaded, that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." How admirable the coincidence with our text! Which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. God, who loves Christ, loves us in him: "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Well may he sum up the series, all is yours! All that you need, all that you could desire, all that your capacity can enjoy, while eternity remains, while the soul expands, while the developements of infinite love in all worlds go onward; and unspeakably and immeasurably more than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or heart of man permitted to enter. Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Fear not the messenger who shall come with cold hand to untwine the silver cord, even though with sudden stroke he break the golden bowl. Death is yours. By his means, all the prayers of a long life shall be answered at once, and when he has done you this office, and you see him departing, you bid adieu to the only remaining evil, for he dies himself; "and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death!"

Let us stand for a little on this height, and look back upon

the goodly scene. Methinks these are the Delectable Mountains, where the pilgrim sojourned; and these ordinances, the perspective glass through which we may descry our inheritance. But who shall suffice to describe, or even to discern, "the unspeakable riches of Christ!" To be brought into union with Christ, is to be united to God, and to be made an heir of no less than "all things." True believers are as a body solemnly offered up, and consecrated unto God, and thereby made partakers of his infinite fulness.

1. Such being the glorious fruit of union with Christ, be exhorted, brethren, to contemplate this union. The cord which binds you to him, binds you to all this world of blessing. If you approach the Lord's table, muse upon the holy connexion. Why do you sit there? Why do you gather around those emblems? It is to show forth the Lord's death —that death by which you are Christ's, are the Father's, are the heirs of so great a promise. Not only know, but feel your oneness with the Lord. Prepare to participate in a feast upon the sacrifice, a feast which marks this union. By this nourishment, this manna, this 'angel's food,' grow up into Him, who is the head. His strength, his wisdom, his righteousness are here offered to you; put into your very hands; extended to your very lips. At this table your "Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." The life he gives you was bought by death. Say, with more faith than those of old, "Lord evermore give us this bread!" Listen to Him, whose you are, and whom you serve, and who by promise is in his house and at his table, when he says, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Come to him; believe on him. When your faith, even feebly, receives him, you are brought nigh to God. "As the Father hath loved us, so love I you; continue ye in my love." "The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." Feel then, that you belong this day, not only to Christ, but to the Father. It is a banquet of fellowship: "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Take then the sacramental bread and wine, as pledges of this gracious union.

2. Contemplate the union of believers with one another. The same bond unites you to the Head and to the members. "All are yours." To whom is this spoken? To believers. Then, most clearly, believers are joint-heirs with Christ, and

sharers in common of a universal blessing. Children o same parentage and members of the same family, shoulc one another. It was his sacramental command re-ena Jo. 13 : 34, " A new commandment I give unto you, th love one another." There can be no tie more close or t than our common union to Christ. Ye are Christ's. ' are ye knit one to another.

Children of one Father—members of one Head—lov one dying Saviour—heirs of one blessing which comprise things ;' here, I beseech you, be not estranged one from ther. Belie not by cold hearts and evil surmisings th fession of the most tender attachment which is known a men. The same lips which grew pale and cold on the utter the request, ' Little children, love one another.' haps you have doubted of your acceptance : here is a " We know that we have passed from death unto life, be we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother ab in death." Corinthian disciples contended about mini The apostle rebukes them by reminding them, all is y The same argument rebukes contention about any thing " All things are for your sakes ;" being thus enriched having a blessing so large that as in regard to the manna ry one is sure of having enough and to spare, desist fro heart-burnings and jealousies, and look to your common i itance. " Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compa one of another ; love as brethren ; be pitiful, be court not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing, but con wise blessing ; knowing that ye are thereunto called, th should inherit a blessing. 1 Pet. 3 : 8, 9.

How unspeakably great the privilege of Christ's Ch What a favor to be brought into it ! What could your ask more than " all things" ? You are come to " Jesu Mediator of the new covenant," and through him to " Gc Judge of all." You are joined to an innumerable compa angels, and to the general assembly and church of the born which are written in heaven, and to the spirits o men made perfect." Christ is yours, and all is yours. (has become to you all in all. You are safe ; you are Be firmly settled here, and you may bid the world rage. a blessed company. Even such portions of it as are her are blessed. But most blessed shall it be when all the tinct communions shall be made one ; when all separate semblies shall be convened ; when all successive genera of Christians shall sit down together ; when we shall see all, and hear the story of grace recounted by all, from downwards, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, m great tribulations, and men of great and marvellous pa

and when we shall see Him of whom we have heard so much, and believed, alas, so little!

3. Finally, Consider the peculiar and tender relation in which this Scripture shows Christ's ministers, both to Christ's people, and to Christ himself. Ye beloved but unwise and contending Corinthians, see your covenant, according to which life and death are yours, things present and future are yours, but still more specially, Paul is yours, Apollos is yours, Cephas is yours, because ye are Christ's. That is, if there be logic in Paul, Paul, Apollos and Cephas are part of Christ's inheritance and possession. Christ makes them and gives them. It is no unmeaning phrase we read, when it is said of the ascending Christ, "he gave gifts unto men," "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers." It was no accident, as to time and season, that just as he was ascending he said, "Go ye and teach all nations." It is no empty metaphor, when he who appears in the midst of the golden candlesticks, clothed to the feet with a priestly garment, girt with a golden girdle, with eyes like flame, and voice like many waters, and a sharp two-edged sword issuing from his mouth, and whose countenance is as the sun shining in his strength; when he, at whose feet the beloved disciple falls as dead, says, "I am he who hold the seven stars in my right hand;" "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." No, my brethren, all these things have a significancy, and show that the ministers of the gospel are yours, because they first are Christ's. "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Paul was "free from all," yet for the sake of gaining the more, he made himself "servant unto all." Do not mistake me, as if I held that the power of the ministry is derived from the beloved people, and not from the Lord Jesus Christ, for their sakes. The body of Christ's people have the prerogative of choosing the church-officers who shall rule over them; but these officers receive all power of authority from the Lord Jesus Christ, through the orderly acts of those who are already in office. These officers are distinctly set forth in the word and recognised in our churches. They are denominated rulers, guides, governors, ensamples, pastors; and their beloved people are styled the flock. To them belong these ministers and elders, with all their gifts and graces. They are not priests; they are not, in the Christian sense prophets; they are not lords over God's heritage; but they are the voice of Christ to his people. When ordained, they are by that act made ministers of the church at large; when separated to a particular work, or translated to a particular charge, they are made ministers of that particular church. It is a so-

lemn and heart-touching connexion which is then formed ; one which may well draw upon the deep affections of both parties ; and one which would stretch these cords even to anguish, were it not for the reflection, that the people are the minister's, the minister is the people's; the people are Christ's, the minister is Christ's ; all things are his—all things are theirs—all things are Christ's—all—all together are God's. Here are foreshadowings of fulfilment for that mysterious promise : " I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

SERMON DLXXXV.

BY REV. H. G. LIVINGSTON,

PASTOR OF THE THIRD REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

THE IMMORTALITY OF CHARACTER.

" He that is unjust let him be unjust still ; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still ; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy let him be holy still." REV. xxii. 11.

THESE words were uttered in anticipation of scenes which are yet to be realized. They evidently refer to that solemn period, so often spoken of in Scripture, when Christ shall come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and to be admired in all them that believe. They intimate, and that most clearly, that whatever *then* the complexion of the soul shall be, it shall continue to be forever. Beyond that day and hour there shall be no change. The separating line when drawn shall be unalterably fixed.

The Bible uniformly represents mankind as made up of two great classes. " The unjust" and " the filthy" are the representatives of one class ; " the righteous" and " the holy," of the other. Our sins or our virtues may differ in their developements, and may be exercised with respect to different objects ; we may not be equally sinful nor equally righteous, yet to the one or the other of these grand divisions, do we individually belong. We are either for God or we are against

him ; we are gathering with him or we are scattering abroad.

The particular point to which we wish at present to direct your attention, is the fact, that these different classes of individuals are destined to pass into eternity with the same character that they had on earth. However their capacities may be expanded or their circumstances changed, yet morally, they are to remain as they have been. "If the tree fall towad the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."

We can conceive it possible that the soul might pass through some great transformation, by which its former history would be lost, and all the earlier impressions made upon it be obliterated. The doctrine has been often taught, that in the intermediate state, between death and the resurrection, the soul will undergo a *purifying* process ; and that in *this* way it will become prepared for a world of everlasting holiness. Even where the truth, for which we are contending, is admitted to its full extent, yet the reasons of the fact are not always nor adequately understood. Many who believe that this life is preparatory to another, regard the connexion between the two as merely a matter of arbitrary arrangement. They do not see how in the very nature of things it *must* be, that our character and conduct here determine all that is to come after them. But, my hearers, religion accords with true philosophy. The reasons for the oft-repeated assertion, that as we live *here*, so shall we live hereafter, lie deep in the very elements of our being. The sophistries of the sceptic may delude us, and our own wicked hearts pervert our understandings, but the calm and sober investigation of truth, as discovered in the works of the Almighty, tends but to confirm and illustrate the infallible teachings of his word. If we may judge from what we know and what we can see, of the world around us, we have the strongest evidence for the Immortality of Character.

That we may make this apparent, we ask you,

I. To *consider for a moment what constitutes the character.*

What are the elements of the moral man ? It is true, we necessarily include in the character, the qualities or dispositions with which we are originally formed, and in this sense speak of men as naturally depraved, or otherwise. Yet we commonly refer to something which is acquired ; to the propensities and tastes when in a state of maturity or developement ; to the fruit rather than the germ from whence it springs. We are accustomed to say, that the character is now in a state of formation ; that it is now modified by the thousand agencies to which it is exposed, and that it may not for some time to come, attain a perfectly definite and invariable com-

plexion. It is evident from this that we have particular reference in speaking of the character, to that condition in which the soul is, after it has passed through a period of trial, and its native faculties have been exercised and disciplined. We refer not to the gilded binding of the book, nor to the blank leaves it contains, however they may be discolored, but to the sum of the impressions made upon its pages—to the book as written over with the busy hand of Time.

Now if the soul survives the body, which we are all ready to admit, must we not reasonably infer, that it will carry with it, not merely its original elements, but also the strength and maturity which have been imparted to them by years of cultivation or indulgence? There is nothing in nature to make any other supposition even plausible. We have no analogy to warrant the opinion that the character may be stripped off from the soul as the garments are from the body. The full-grown man may become a meagre skeleton, a mere wreck of what he formerly was in the days of his pride and vigor, but he can never again become the little child—never dwindle into infancy. His physical constitution is not susceptible of such a change. The wide branching tree may lose its verdure or be broken by the tempest, but no conceivable process can reduce it to the sapling, or compress it within the folds of the seminal germ. So the character may lose its tone, or be deprived of some of its former peculiarities, but it can never be converted into the original elements from which it has been evolved. It bears the same relation to the soul that shape or color does to matter. It is a part and property of the soul—and so far as we can perceive, they can never be entirely separated from each other.

We have reason to believe that impressions made upon the soul are never lost. If it were necessary we might mention many interesting facts in support of this opinion. Individuals have been known under certain circumstances, to remember things with which they had once been familiar, but which had long, long been forgotten; and yet the character is made up of the effects, which these words and thoughts and actions—these unremembered things—have left behind them. It appears to us about as reasonable to suppose, that the soul can be separated from its faculties as from its character. We confess that when we consider the nature of character, we can see no valid way of escaping the conclusion, that he who at death is unjust, will be unjust still; and he which is filthy will be filthy still; and he that is righteous will be righteous still, and he that is holy will be holy still.

II. Consider, secondly, *in what manner the character is formed.*

How do men become licentious, intemperate, or profane:—how do they become upright, benevolent and wise? Not by accident, surely, nor by birth, for whatever evil propensities we may have by nature, yet we do not spring into existence like the fabled goddess, full armed and strong. We acquire our character, as we do the qualities of our manhood, by exercise and growth; by gradually going on from one degree of strength unto another.

The miser was not made so in a moment. Years have been confirming habits early formed and giving intenseness to desires that were early cherished. Once his idol gold received only the partial homage of his heart; now, every faculty and thought are devoted to its service. Once he craved only the abundance of the rich; now he would defraud the widow of her mite, and envies the beggar at the gate his scanty portion. The murderer has not become the foul spirit that he is, at once. You can trace the progress of his sad degeneracy from the time when with a "bosom that carried anger as the flint bears fire," he first mingled in scenes of strife and tumult, until now when his hands are crimsoned with his brother's blood his life is about to pay the forfeit of his crimes. Once conscience lifted its voice and checked him in his waywardness; but it was disregarded. Again it spoke, though in more feeble accents, but it was again refused, until at last insulted and disowned, it ceased to do its office work and left him to his own devices. Could you have the chart of his past history unrolled before you, you would see that his crime was but the visible representative of his character, and that his character was but the legitimate result of the deteriorating process through which he had passed. The wicked man, let his offences be what they may, has not reached the bad eminence, which he occupies, without cultivating evil habits, mingling with evil associations, and indulging corrupt and unholy thoughts. He has had to resist good influences and kindly motives and become insensible to gentle persuasions and terrific threatenings. The work, difficult at first, has become easier at every repetition. The flaming cherub that once guarded his way has at last departed from his path; the barriers that God had erected to defend him have been despised again and again, until now effectually destroyed. In like manner, it is true of the good man that he advances just in proportion as he cultivates his distinctive traits and makes a vigorous resistance against every thing that threatens evil. In the kingdom of God as elsewhere, there is first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. We must add to our faith virtue, and to

virtue knowledge, and to knowledge every other grace and good attainment. The righteous holds on his way becoming stronger and stronger, while evil men and seducers wax worse and worse.

Thus you will perceive that the character is formed according to the same law that obtains in every department of the divine administration; a law, which in respect to some things at least, we all admit; a law with which we are made acquainted in the earliest stages of our childhood, and upon which we uniformly act in all the common concerns of life; the law that the future is determined by the present; that what we shall be is only the enlargement and perfection of what we now are. In viewing this great principle, "the child is" indeed "the father of the man." He has the web of his own destiny within his hands and is giving shape by his present conduct to the results of coming years. We see that to-day is but the reprint of yesterday; simply a fresher and stronger impression than had been made before. The desires then gratified clamour again and yet more loudly for indulgence. The habits then formed are yet adhered to, and exercise over us a more unlimited control. The principles then avowed are still defended and are taking a deep hold within, and so in like manner, will the future be but the reproduction of the present, bearing the same relation to it that the full length portrait bears to the miniature. This is as surely a law in the moral as is gravitation in the natural world. Principles vegetate and propensities become established, as really as seeds and plants. Hence the almost utter impossibility of making any radical alteration in the characters of those who have advanced in years. Hence when the lives of men were extended far beyond what they now are, as a natural consequence they became giants in wickedness.

When new worlds are discovered in the heavens, however magnificent they may be, they are yet formed to be controlled by precisely the same laws that regulate those which have been known for ages; and so when in the gospel, we learn of regions of eternal night and endless day, in which the soul shall sink or soar hereafter, are we not to presume that it will still be under the operation of the same laws that have affected it on earth? We are indeed assured, that the laws which regulate the moral world are even more stable and more permanent than those which regulate the physical;—that heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle of God's word shall fail.

There is nothing that nature teaches us in regard to God more clearly, than that his laws are uniform and abiding; that he will, so to speak, make any sacrifice rather than devi-

ate from established rules. Let the best man that lives thrust himself into the fire, or leap from the brow of the deep precipice, and he will share the same fate as the careless and ungodly that do likewise. Let angels, God's first-born sons, rebel, and he will hunt them from their exalted seats and bind them in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day. No matter who transgresses, although the divine compassions are infinite, yet without true repentance there can be no salvation. Now before we can believe that God is to act differently hereafter—that he is to renounce the character he has always thus far sustained, we must have some new and explicit revelation on the subject. All analogy favors the idea, that he will still adhere to the same course that has marked his government thus far, and that at death, he that is unjust will be unjust still; and he which is filthy will be filthy still; and he that is righteous will be righteous still; and he that is holy will be holy still.

III. *We ask you to consider thirdly, whether there be any changes to be passed through, or any influences to be exerted in the future, that will be likely to effect a radical transformation in the character.*

Will the dissolution of the body have a tendency to do it? We have passed through many physical changes, but are not our characters substantially the same as they were before? If they have been affected it has been through other causes. In our maturity, we discover to a considerable degree the same qualities and traits we did in earlier life; and yet the body has been changing every hour. The profane, the proud or the covetous man, does not become a different being when his body is emaciated or his limbs are severed; when he is abroad upon the sea, or when he is wandering in distant lands. Why then should the tearing asunder of the invisible ligament that connects the spirit with the body, change the moral aspect or complexion of that spirit? The faculties of the soul are often most vigorous when the eyes are sunken, and the heart beats slow and feebly. The half-articulated utterances of the dying man often give evidence that his mind is intensely active, and his thoughts yet fixed upon the objects that have so long absorbed them. And may we not then very safely presume, that since the character has survived all other outward changes, it will also survive this one of death? Whatever difficulties there may be in arguing from analogy in favor of the soul's existence beyond the existence of the body, yet admitting this, there are none, so far as we can perceive, in relation to the character. If death does not destroy nor change the essence of the spirit, it is but fair to con-

clude that it will not alter its complexion. The taking down of the partition wall that separates eternity from time, we must believe will have no more effect upon man's moral nature, than did his growth from infancy to manhood. And if death can make no alteration in the character, we know of nothing in the world beyond that can. No new influences nor motives will be there at work, to transform and to purify. So far as we know any thing of the eternal state, it is adapted to confirm and strengthen those who have entered it, in their holiness or guilt. Heaven is not the gate to hell, nor is hell a preparatory school for heaven; but between these two worlds there is a great gulf fixed, so that were it possible for any to desire to pass, they could not.

But you may say, my hearers, that after all we are but dealing in probabilities and presumptions, while on such a subject we should offer demonstration. We grant you that we are reasoning from things known to things unknown, that is, to sense; from things visible to things invisible, because aside from revelation, we cannot on such a theme do otherwise. But if we are only able to show you that the future will *probably* be like the present; that there is nothing to hinder the operation of like cause and the production of like effects, we accomplish all that we desire, for we have the Scriptures not only to establish what we offer, but to supply whatever may be lacking. We have shown you that it is reasonable to believe that the character will be as immortal as the soul. The word of God places this beyond all reach of doubt. It asserts most clearly that men *shall* continue on hereafter as they have been—that they who sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and they who sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. It declares that at the final judgment, there shall be a separation between the wheat and the tares, the precious and the vile;—that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, while the wicked shall be cast into the furnace of fire.

We cannot believe that any thing further is needed to secure your assent to the point we have had under consideration. Indeed it may be that none of you are disposed to question the fact that the character will outlive the body, and be in another world precisely like what it is in this. But do you adequately appreciate this truth? Do you consider that every moment is doing something toward confirming you in sin or establishing you in virtue; that every day is giving permanence to your habits, strength to your principles, and intensity to your desires; and that as you now are, unless you are soon the subject of an extraordinary and supernatural

change, you are to remain—remain forever;—if unjust, to be unjust still, and if filthy to be filthy still; if righteous, to be righteous still; and if holy to be holy still.

An ancient artist being asked why he labored so incessantly upon his pictures—why he formed every color with so much care, and drew every line with such precision, replied, that he was "painting for eternity." So, my hearers, are every one of us, though in a far truer sense, than he did. We are daily marking the features and forming the complexion of the portrait that is to outlast the wreck of the material universe. It is this that makes the few short years we pass on earth so fearfully important. We have but one character to form, and but one brief season in which to do it. How ambitious should we be that the work be executed well, and how careful lest the appropriate time should pass by unimproved. With what solicitude should we each one keep our hearts and ponder the paths of our feet.

If the character were destined to perish with the frail tabernacle that we dwell in, indifference might answer. But no—it must last through the unwasting ages of eternity, and he who attempts to build such a structure without great care and patient effort, is infinitely more foolish than he who erects his house where the first risings of the tide will carry it away.

As we have shown, there is a constant approximation in all the developments of character towards a fixed and unchangeable state. Habits are becoming more confirmed, and principles and partialities more strongly established; and hence where there is any desire for change—where the wicked man has a disposition to obey the truth, and feels himself almost persuaded to become a Christian, his delay is in fact almost equal to an utter abandonment of his intentions, for it is throwing himself again upon the tide, that by and by he can no more withstand than he can arrest the devouring tempest. "Too late!" is the piercing cry that often goes up from the death-bed. "Too late" the aged sinner sighs, as he thinks of the harvest past and the summer ended. "Too late" may be our mournful language, if the forming mould of character be not stamped with the impress of truth and religion.

1. *We can understand, in the light which this subject affords us, the nature and philosophy of a state of retribution.*

There has always been more or less of a disposition to sneer at the representations which the Bible gives us of the condition and destiny of the lost. Some men are free to ridicule the idea of a worm that never dies, and a fire that is not quenched. They ask contemptuously, and is there a literal

place of torment—a dungeon from which there can be no escape until the uttermost farthing has been paid! I ask you, my hearers, to consider well, what elements of misery are mixed up in the sinner's character, and you can then say whether such terrible imagery will not be even more than realized? The sinner carries the materials of his own punishment within him. God need only give him over to his wickedness and he will find that though his future dwelling place be paved with gold or arched with sapphire, it is but a magnificent hell. Let him but admit that his character will be immortal and immutable, and we care not what may be his theory about a future state. Let him but admit that his passions and habits, and principles are to go with him—that he is to be as covetous, and proud, and cruel in the world to come, where no opportunities for gratification will be afforded him, as here, where even when indulged to their full extent they fail to satisfy, and we say he is sure of an awful harvest, wherever he carries the seeds of ruin with him. The very nature of his constitution will ensure for him an amount of misery of which it is impossible to conceive. And if these elements of woe are to increase—if these cravings are to become more violent—these passions rage more fiercely, then will there never be a time when the lost spirit cannot say with truth,

> "And in the lowest deep,
> A lower deep still threatening
> To devour me, opens wide;
> To which the hell I suffer,
> Seems a heaven."

"A man may sustain the spirit of his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?"

Even in this life, where rewards and punishments are so imperfectly administered, the vicious and profligate man must make a vigorous effort to prevent himself from being miserable. The task is often so great, that he prefers to die like Judas, rather than be disquieted by the stings of passion and lashed by the upbraidings of remorse. But let him lose this clayey tenement, and yet retain his spirit: be under bondage to the same vile habits, and be maddened by the same strong cravings; let him have the same memory of the past, the same accusing thoughts, the same dread fears, and if he does not drink the wine cup of God's wrath, he has at least one of his own, as deadly and as bitter.

It was a custom among the Egyptians, we are told, on some of their occasions of festivity, to have the embalmed body of a departed spirit brought out and exhibited before them—probably to induce a remembrance of years gone by:

perhaps to show how they would be in a similar situation. In the world to which the sinner is going, there will be a constant return of these terrific monitors of the past. The ghostly form of mis-spent years and slighted opportunities of good, will come, stealing up every avenue of the mind, and send their poisonous influence through every fibre of the heart.—Ah! there is an awful significancy in those words: "They would none of my counsels, they despised all my reproof; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.

2. *In conclusion, permit me to add, that this subject will enable you to form a correct and rational idea of true religion.*

What God requires of us, is something more than a mere transient impulse for good; an earnest prayer in the time of need, or a few tears upon the bed of death. Possibly you may be saved, like the penitent thief, in the very last moments of your life. The grace of God is competent to any work, and we dare not affix to its blessed operations a precise and definite limit. But all analogy favors the idea, that if you would be saved, you must, by the aid of the Spirit, build up for yourselves a holy character, and work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Religion is a habit of mind—a growth of the soul—a permanent principle; and a preparation for a future world is a work that demands a lifetime. You are in various ways tempted to defer attending to your spiritual interests. The hope of some more convenient season allures you to delay. But you must begin early and toil hard, if you would realize what true religion is designed to effect; if you would have your characters transformed and fitted for eternity. We must distrust to a great degree, the piety that commences in old age or on the sick bed. We want the whole life given to the work, to be assured that it is genuine. We would have you strive as vigorously, as if it depended entirely upon your own exertions whether or not you were to reach the final dwelling of the saints. But do not suppose, because we thus speak, that we undervalue in the least, the blessed work accomplished by the Saviour. So far from this, we affirm that the only way in which your present characters can be radically changed, is through the subduing grace and effectual mercy of Christ Jesus; that all your hope of being turned from sin to God, and that all your strength to persevere in forming for yourselves a character that God will love, must be derived from him. The seeds of faith must be implanted and strengthened from above. But yet your faith must be conjoined with works, and your religion must be the obedience of your life to

truth, to duty, and to God. "The tenet of justification by faith," I quote the words of the lamented Chalmers, "is at antipodes with the idea of our virtue here being the adequate price, but not with the idea of its being the indispensable preparation for our eternity hereafter. Under the economy of grace heaven is conceived essentially to lie in character—to be in fact but the full-grown development of our present charity, our present piety, our present holiness. There is nothing surely in the doctrine and philosophy of habit, counter to that system which represents it as the great business of those who have received the promises of the gospel, to perfect their holiness; which tells us, that what a man soweth that shall he also reap; which speaks on the one hand of the path of the just, as if his rudimental virtue *here* were to his perfected virtue hereafter, what the dawn of morn is to the shining of the meridian day; and which speaks on the other hand of the wicked being filled with the fruit of their own ways; which in a word represents the kingdom of heaven as begun on earth, and at last closes its description of the relation between time and eternity with these impressive words—'He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still; he that is righteous let him be righteous still: and he that is holy let him be holy still.'"

DEATH NO TERROR.

The believer in Christ should banish all solicitude about the event of death to himself or to others who depart in the faith. Christ assumed our nature, "took part of flesh and blood, that through death"—first endured in his own person and then vanquished by his resurrection—"he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The Christian has no occasion to be in bondage to the fear of death; indeed by such a bondage he dishonors the power and the grace of Christ, and puts discredit upon his finished work.

It is sometimes the case that even where the intellect, the heart, and the will are all properly disciplined for the advent of death, there is a nervous apprehension of the mere physical process that renders the thought of death unwelcome. And indeed there must be something repugnant to the sensibilities of our nature in the thought of dissolution, whenever the mind dwells upon this apart from its relations to a higher existence. The demolition of a house in which we have lived from infancy, and every stone and beam and arch and angle of which

has some association of childhood and of home, awakens feelings of sadness, though the building is old and crazy, and not longer fit to be occupied. But the mind should not live thus in the past, and hug the old stones, and timbers, and nails, as if these were home or had in themselves any life and virtue; it should look forward to the house that is to succeed the time-worn tenement, should study its plan, arrangement, and effect, and transmute the memories of the old into the hopes of the new. It is thus by a beautiful analogy that Chrysostom discourses of the believer's change at death. "When a man is about to rebuild an old and tottering house, he first sends out its occupants, then tears it down, and builds anew a more splendid one. This occasions no grief to the occupants, but rather joy. For they do not think of the demolition which they see, but of the house which is to come, though not yet seen. When God is about to do similar work, he destroys our body and removes the soul that was dwelling in it, as from some house that he may build it anew and more splendidly and again bring the soul with greater glory into it. Let us not, therefore, regard the tearing down, but the splendor which is to succeed." Thus in a higher strain does the Apostle speak of this blessed exchange: "*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*" The Christian should familiarize his mind with the thought of dying as one familiarizes himself with the thought of exchanging an old and decayed though still serviceable house or garment, for one new, bright, glorious—of better material, yes, of an imperishable fabric. It is idle to conceal from oneself the fact of his own mortality and of his exceeding frailty. And it is unwise and unnecessary to allow in the mind a secret dread of death. That event should be familiar to the Christian, not as a process of physical decay, but as a process of mysterious and sudden but of certain and glorious transition from the seen to the unseen, from the mortal to the immortal.

"The Christian, when he leaves the body, is at once with the Lord Jesus. He rushes, as it were, instinctively, to his presence, and casts himself at his feet. He has no other home than where the Saviour is; he thinks of no future joy or glory but that which is to be enjoyed with him. Why then should we fear death? Lay out of view, as we may, the momentary pang, the chillness and the darkness of the grave, and think of that which will be the moment after death—the view of the Redeemer, the sight of the splendors of the heavenly world, the angels, the spirits of the just made perfect, the river of the paradise of God, and the harps of praise, and what has the Christian to fear in the prospect of dying?"

THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 12, Vol. XXVI.] DECEMBER, 1852. [Whole No. 312.

SERMON DLXXXVI.

BY R. W. DICKINSON, D. D.,
New York City.

JOY IN GOD THROUGH CHRIST.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. v. 11.

There is a remarkable peculiarity in Paul's disposition. To him is entrusted the charge of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles; but he is not the stern religionist, the fierce sectary we might have been led to suppose from the relations which he had previously sustained to Judaism. He is the decided, yet liberal—the devoted, yet amiable Christian. Thwarted in his movements, yet he is not despondent. Exposed to persecution, yet he is not embittered in his feelings. Doomed to suffer, he does not complain. Threatened with bonds and imprisonments, neither the prospective loss of liberty nor of life can shake his firmness or repress his spiritual joys. He ever rejoices in the hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but joy and triumph pervade the very heart of his trials.

Yes, brethren, if you would witness an embodied illustration of the blessed power of our holy religion, look into that gloomy dungeon. See there a man who might have been honored by his nation, had he not become a Christian; who might have enjoyed domestic comforts, lettered ease and distinction, an unmolested course, a peaceful old age, had he not

given up all for Christ. But is he a haggard, wretched man? Do we hear any regrets from his lips for having espoused the new faith? O no; he is very joyful in the God of his salvation. Listen to the praises with which his dungeon resounds. Ponder the exhortation sent to all his brethren—"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice."

Singular, and aside from Revelation, inexplicable circumstance, that a man so sorely tried, should have derived his only joy from an invisible, incomprehensible source! Not so did the imprisoned Socrates or condemned Seneca rejoice: not so did the priests of the grove, or the philosophers of the porch, rejoice: not so does human nature joy in God.

Yet *it is strange* that man should not seek his chief happiness in the Author of his being. Has not the soul been formed for the enjoyment of its Maker? Does not its irrepressible desire for joy indicate the original purpose of its being! But who does not know that nothing of earth's mould can satisfy its boundless aspirations? What is that word joy to the greater proportion of men? They know it not. Even their so-called pleasures are stolen, hurried, frantic, securing to their souls only some new anguish for the morrow. Despairing of happiness on earth, I doubt not that men in general would be amply content could they only keep the ordinary miseries of life in abeyance.

We are wont to speak of vice and crime, of disease and death, in proof of man's depravity. I want no other than the fact asserted by Scripture and corroborated by the history of our race, that man seeks his happiness away from God. Surely there is something awfully, fatally wrong in the internal condition of his very being, if the soul of man does not as naturally turn to its Maker as the needle to the pole. Cast your eye over this vast moral system. It was originally pronounced good by its Author. So glorious a Being could have proposed no other end in his creation, than fulness and perpetuity of joy. If it were not now essentially deranged, the world of mankind would be advancing in its cycles of holy happiness around the throne of unsullied blessedness, with the harmony and celerity, with which the planets move on in their majestic orbits around the source of material light. Joy and gladness would be found therein; thanksgiving and the voice of melody surpassing the symphonious hallelujahs of heaven, when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

Until man, then, shall be led to seek his happiness in God, not only must he be in pursuit of shadows, but be defeating the true and ultimate purpose of his being.

But how shall he be brought to joy in God? I need not ask, whether it would have been possible, had we been left to the dim light of nature, to look up to God as the source of joy. The Great Spirit of natural religion comes not within the definite purview of a finite mind. He is too retired and silent to influence our habitual emotions. Let us think of God as the omnipotent Creator, the beneficent Father of the universe. Man may not fail to be wrapt in admiration as he casts his eye over the beauty and brightness of creation. He may be inclined to adore the unseen source of all things when he contemplates the evidences of the divine skill and goodness, which encompass him as the effulgence of the noon; but when the thunders utter their voices, and the cloud surcharged with the element of death approaches nearer and yet nearer, shall not fear and trembling take hold on him? He may think that God is good; love to expatiate on the evidences of his overflowing goodness, but, ah! has he not sinned? If, notwithstanding, he dreams of peace with God, is not his joy delusion? Could he even hope, if he did not regard the divine goodness irrespective of the holiness, and the truth, and the justice of the almighty Father? The wiser heathen thought that God was good; but "how can man be just with God?" was their natural enquiry. Nay, what is the divine goodness, philosophically considered, but one aspect of that holiness which blights the purity of angels, and regards sin, even in its most impalpable state, with abhorrence? What is the divine goodness but that all-pervading feeling of God's mighty heart, which leads him to promote the highest happiness of his moral universe by at once rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked? The government of God, because he is infinitely good, has high and holy ends, which necessarily forbid impunity to sin, and can in no wise be answered by either repentance, confession, or amendment. The ends of human government cannot: how much less the divine. Commit a crime, and you have necessarily incurred the penalty of civil law; and upon the same principles of good and righteous government, *sin*, and you have engaged in a fearful controversy with the almighty Ruler of the universe. It is in vain to say that your conviction of God's goodness fortifies your heart against all prognostications of evil. If you *feel* that you have sinned, (and how can you repress the conviction?) you must know that you enjoy no harmonious alliance with your Maker and Judge. Mark me! I am not arguing the point whether, in the midst of your sins and worldly pursuits, you may not generally be at ease; whether, by sophistry or sensuality you may not fortify your heart with an imperturbable apathy as respects your relations to God; but whether you joy in God

as the Originator, and Controller, and Disposer of your being? Even admitting that you are seldom or never troubled in your mind, that you carry with you a light heart, this is not the point. The question is, Is God the source and centre of your joys? Have you no fear of him when you think that he may be strict to mark iniquity? Can you commit yourself with conscious and joyous safety to his supreme disposal? I care not how erroneous the speculative views which one may entertain, or however moral he may be, only remove him from his free-thinking companions, or from the business and gaieties of life; let him lay his head upon that solitary, noiseless, pillow; let him think of himself, of this world, of death, of the prophetic analogies of the present to the future, and, so far from joying in that incomprehensible Being, he is troubled in all his thoughts. Amid that thick and appalling darkness which shrouds the throne of Almighty God, he can "find no hook to hang a hope on." He knows not what awaits him beyond the murky limits of the sepulchre: and it is this uncertainty that has stricken fear and trembling through many a glad heart in the world, and given redoubled poignancy to the pangs of woe; as it were, beclouding the brightness of day, and augmenting to a ten-fold degree the blackness of night.

I contend, that it is impossible to joy in God, unless he be revealed to man's distinct and intimate knowledge; unless we have been made to feel that he takes a deep and deathless interest in our welfare; has no pleasure in our death; pities us even as a father his children, and waits to be gracious; yea, that he may glorify his own name, and illustrate the stability of his throne, in our salvation.

Now, where can be gathered any satisfactory knowledge of God, except from the Word of God himself? Blessed Book! I no longer grope in the darkness of nature, nor am I embarrassed by the expedients of conscious guilt. I see the attributes of Jehovah in all their plentitude, and in all their harmony. I know that he can be just to the universe, just to the law, and just to himself, and yet pardon the sinner. Those very attributes which were once arrayed against me, are now leagued for my salvation. So far from regarding him with suspicion and dread, because he is immaculate in holiness, uncompromising in justice, inviolable in truth, I know that he loves my poor soul, and I can "go unto God, my exceeding joy." He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth.

This, in truth, is the great end of the Gospel revelation to man; to unveil to our adoring vision the blended perfections of a just and merciful God; to convince an erring and hell-

deserving world that we have a friend and father in God; thus leading us to joy and rejoice in him.

Through Jesus Christ, the medium of this Revelation, we may regard him as a gracious Lawgiver, a pardoning God, a reconciled Father. As the sun reveals to us the beauties and sublimities of God's works, so does Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, unveil the glories of the Eternal Throne. Through him, all the attributes of Deity shine forth with vindicated and resplendent lustre, yet sweetly attempered to human vision. God, the great, the unsearchable One, is brought down to us in such an attitude that we cannot fail to comprehend. God, the infinite Spirit, is brought near to our hearts. We see him visiting the abodes of fallen man; attending the sick; sympathising with the afflicted; mourning at the grave; weeping over the incorrigibly impenitent; yea, in the person of Jesus Christ, "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities."

Do you doubt it? Think, whether it was possible for a holy and just God to restore the sinner to forfeited privileges without an expiation of his sins; whether it be possible to account for the sacrifices of the heathen-world, if the human mind in all past ages did not virtually recognise the necessity of expiating a violated law by blood. Search the records of sacred history, and see whether all holy men did not look forward with anxious expectation to the coming of IMMANUEL, *God with us*. See whether all the sacrifices of the Old-Testament economy did not expressly point to an atonement which should be effected by some mysterious personage? Whether all prophesies and all types are not most exactly, most wonderfully fulfilled in Him who died on Calvary's cross a sacrifice for the sin of the world?

Tell us not that we make God a monster, who could be satisfied with nought but the life-blood of his own Son: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Tell us not that God must have been fired with the most implacable hatred toward his own creatures, if no less a sacrifice could appease his anger: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Dare not even to intimate that we divest God's nature of all that is amiable and lovely, and represent his laws to be written like Draco's in blood: "He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things." O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and goodness of God! In that Cross, all the effulgence of Deity converges and centres. By that Cross all the "enmity" of man is slain.

"Lo, this is our God. We have waited for him and he will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." "Behold God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: he also is become my salvation."

Such are the declarations of Scripture in reference to the causes and effects of the Mediatorial scheme; such the effusions of holy joy that burst from the lips of holy men of old. Have they met with no response from the hearts of believers? Do you say that the professed followers of Jesus do not in general feel that such are their views and emotions towards God? Alas! I know it. But such have never cordially received the atonement, or they would not still attempt to feed upon the beggarly elements of the world. How is it to be expected that they should joy in God who have never given themselves to him by faith and love! whose only sense of duty is a search for the sake of their quiet security in sin, in a round of forms and ceremonies, or who have backslidden from the ways of the Lord! God himself says that to them he is a "wilderness" unto such, "a land of darkness." But let us appeal to the true Christian. He is the only one competent to decide; and I ask him whether he has ever had his most elevated and endearing views of God through the mediation of Jesus Christ! Whether it be not through Christ that he is enabled to joy in God as his Saviour, and to rejoice in the contemplation of his perfections! Whether a sense of God's favor in Christ is not to him better than the riches and honors and pleasures of sin! Where on earth shall the voice of celestial joy be heard? In the tabernacles of the righteous! Truly, in the beautifully poetic language of Scripture, "in God is their strength."

You can testify, my new-born soul. You were once the victim of pangs of remorse and dread. You were once seeking peace for your soul. There was a time when that yawning abyss of fiery wrath was before you. You were on the verge of despair, when lo! God shone into your heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" and then the veil was taken away from your flowing eyes, your heart leaped for joy, and your tongue broke forth in glorious anthems.

You have gone with him to the bed of death. See there the dying Christian! What does he not think from the king of terrors, when he thinks of the dissolution of his earthly house, and take his last look of all that was once so dear

to him, without regret? what is it that fortifies, elevates, entrances his parting spirit? O it is the remembrance that comes over his heart like the distant music of the blessed, that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; it is the deathless conviction of his soul that God, even his own God in Christ, will never leave, and never forsake him.

Will it be said that such emotions of joy are not confined to those who maintain the atonement of Christ? I am aware that men have been indifferent to death; or that they have expressed a willingness to die; or thought that they were at peace with God; but the records of men tell not of one having died *rejoicing in God*, save the self-renouncing follower of the crucified Jesus. Nor is it possible that any other should. When the world is receding, and eternity with its dread realities is breaking upon my naked spirit, can I peacefully think of that holy Being before whom I am shortly to appear, if I do not *know* that my sins are pardoned? Oh! as I am about to launch upon that dread, unknown futurity, do I not need assurance that I shall not be lost? Whose voice can allay the dark forebodings of my guilty soul? On whose arm can my trembling spirit lean as I enter that fearful passage, never to return? "None but Christ!" "None but Christ!" was the exclamation of a dying martyr; it has found a sweet response in the dying lips of thousands of God's people; and when I think of the evidence which has been afforded to us in his death that God loves us with a quenchless love; that all his precious promises are yea and amen in Christ; that there is no reason why we should distrust his favor, and every reason why we should most cheerfully trust in his mercy and grace, I feel that Christ should be *all our desire*, as he must be, if we are ever saved, *our only salvation*. Nay, how can we be assured, that God is not *now our enemy*, short of the evidence of his grace and mercy which has been presented to us in the expiatory offering of his Son?

Hear the great Apostle.—(And his testimony is surely not to be undervalued—he could not have changed his religion on shadowy grounds; could not have been so weak as to expose himself to poverty, and contempt, and toil, and persecution, for the sake of a poor young man who had been crucified at Jerusalem, if that form had not shrouded Divinity, and that Cross had not been erected for the interests of the uni verse. His, we apprehend, was too strong an intellect to build his hopes for eternity on hay and stubble; and, if we accede to him the gift of inspiration, his was too intimate an acquaintance with God's will to admit of his being deceived as to the grounds of the Divine favor towards man.)—What

was it then that led him to embrace Christianity? The atonement. What animated him to preach the gospel despite of erudite scorn, or of vulgar ridicule? The atonement. What sustained him amid his perils and trials, and enabled him ever to joy in God? The atonement. "We joy in God"—through what medium? the works of his hand? the reason with which he has endowed us? the creatures whom he hath formed? because all nature so brightly symbolizes his perfections? because the air we breathe is so refreshing, and the sun that warms us is so glorious, and our faculties of mental and moral achievement are so sublime? Ah, had man not fallen, no other revelation would have been needed than reason, nor scriptures than the creation; no other incitements to praise and joy in God than the unnumbered blessings which crowd around his path. But listen to Paul, the pardoned sinner: "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Why? because he has delivered us from traditions of the elders? because he so beautifully expounded the law? because he embodied in himself both precept and example, and died in attestation of the truth of his doctrines? O no; Paul knew in whom he had believed—knew that he was not a mere man like himself—simply another prophet sent of God. He knew that no creature could secure to him, a sinner, the favor of a holy God. "We joy in God through our LORD Jesus Christ by whom we have received *the atonement.*"

The atonement is the grand source and medium of the Christian's joy in God, from the hour of his conversion to the last moment of expiring nature—joy in his perfections, his creation, his providence, his purposes. It is not that he has given us a religion which pours a flood of light on immortality, and stamps shame and confusion on all other religious systems; not that it has ameliorated man's condition, advanced science and art, diffused the blessings of liberty and knowledge; not that it expands and energizes the intellect, purifies and ennobles the heart, or fosters the sweet charities of life,—*it is that while we were yet enemies to God, Christ died for us.*

Speak we of the perfections of God? it is well to refer to their embodied exemplification in the character of Christ; or of duty, to him who esteemed it his meat and his drink to do the will of his father; or of wisdom, to the teachings of him who spoke as never man spoke; or of virtue and benevolence, to the loveliness of his spotless example;—so did Paul. But speak we of the only ground of our hope and joy in God, it is the atonement. Would we joy in God? to that mysterious mount must we repair—on the blood-dyed arms of that cross hang our faith. O mystery of mysteries! that our joy in God

should have been purchased by the blood of his only begotten and well beloved Son!

We see, then, the position that Jesus Christ maintains in the system of revealed truth. To him every Mosaical institution referred; of him the Seers of Israel prophesied; to him the expectation of the world was directed. And now every proof of a divine revelation centres in his death; every doctrine for our practical belief springs from his atoning mediation; every argument to the conscience of the sinner is bathed in his blood; every motive to our love, and gratitude, and joy in God emanates from his cross. Without him, we have no such knowledge of God as we need; no access to the mercy seat; no assurance of divine acceptance; no hope of a blessed immortality. Without him there is no deliverance from the condemnation of a righteous law; no escape from the vengeance of an offended God.

Why then this reluctance to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ? Why this effort to degrade his rank, or to change the nature of his death? Beware, my hearers, how you listen to the suggestions of the carnal mind, unless you are prepared to renounce "the faith once delivered unto the saints." I am not inducing an unnecessary caution. My life on it, CHRIST is ALL, or CHRISTIANITY is NOTHING. Take away Jesus, and our religion is a *headless trunk!*

But what reason have you, it may be asked, for believing Christianity to be trne? I need not refer to historical and critical evidences, though they cluster around the Bible, like sunbeams, pointing out to us the high source of this marvellous light. They are all insufficient, nothing worth, unless this gospel has a moral adaptation to our lost condition. What reason have I for belief? You might as well have asked, what reason has yonder wretch for regarding you as his friend and benefactor, if at the expense of great sacrifices, you have relieved his miseries, and raised him to affluence and comfort.

Has not Christ made an atonement for my sins? has he not introduced me to an intimate and endearing friendship with God? Do I not owe to him all my hopes of pardon, purity, and eternal life? Believe the Gospel? How can I help believing it, when it is the very gift which, as a poor, lost sinner, I most urgently need? Believe it? I should be lost to common sense if I did not believe it, when it is the only thing in the wide world that can dispel my fears and relieve the yearnings of my soul. I should justify against myself the charge of *ineffable folly*, if, by disbelief, I spurn God's favor and trifle with my deathless interests. Ah, you must prove to me that man is not a sinner, has no wants, no woes, no sins, no sufferings, no dread forebodings of what

may come after he has "shuffled off this mortal coil," before we can be induced to reject the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement. A firm, cordial belief in God through Jesus Christ, infinitely transcends any system or object that the world may command or value. It affords the only position, from which, sinful man may deduce the sublimated conclusion, "I know that this is but the infancy of an immortal existence; that my sins are pardoned; that God is my portion and heaven my final home." It places man on the only ground where he is truly independent of all the frowns or favors of the world; where joy springs from sorrow, and blessings from afflictions; where poverty becomes imperishable wealth, and obscurity undecaying honor; where life awakens from the sleep of death, and "beauty immortal" arises from the corruption of the tomb.

What, then, does the infidel mean? See the pious poor, from whom he would wrest their only hope; the widow, from whom he would snatch her last resource; the orphan, whom he would turn out to wander at random in a forsaken world; the dying, whom he would reduce to despair! Look over the length and breadth of our world, which we fondly trust may yet be reclaimed from sin and misery; but which *he* would cover with an eternal pall! Talk not to me of charity, when the hopes of a dying world are at stake. Infidel! I arraign thee as man's direst foe. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I solemnly charge upon thee the work of death and damnation!

But what is it that the impenitent sinner means? You do not reject the gospel, and yet you do not believe. You shudder at the infidel's guilt, and yet you have not availed yourself of the believer's privileges. You are not happy—you know you are not; or if, at any time, you imagine yourself so, why is it? Simply because you have added to your stores or your laurels, and gathered around you the means of selfish gratification. Yet what boots it that you enjoy the things of earth? Ah, fill high the Samian bowl; dig deep the mines of gold, or climb the steep of fame; "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Believe me, your pleasures are as "the crackling of thorns under a pot." You are strangers to joy in God. You have never received the atonement. Though Jesus has been preached unto you, and his servants have often plead with you, by his cross and passion, by his bloody sweat and agony, to be reconciled to God; though, in an ordinance of his own appointment, Christ has "evidently been set forth crucified" before you, and by his Word and Spirit is now knocking at the door of your hearts with weeping entreaties, still you have not re-

ceived the atonement. Am I wrong? Why, then, were you not with his disciples when so lately they gathered round the table of their dying Lord? Why are you not this day all devotedness to the honor of his name and the advancement of his cause? Why is it, that should you be called to die this night, your Christian friends would gather around your death-bed in anguish of spirit, and plead with God to have *mercy upon you*, lest you should die without hope? Alas! poor soul! if you have never received the atonement—never embraced Christ as he is offered to you in the gospel—you are still in your sins, and in danger of dying in your sins; still out of Christ, and *in danger of the judgment!*

SERMON DLXXXVII.

BY REV. L. P. DIMMICK, D. D.,
NEWBURYPORT, MASS.

MERCY REJOICETH AGAINST JUDGMENT.

"And mercy rejoiceth against judgment."
JAMES ii. 17.

FAR in the Empyrean heights, above the rolling spheres, and whither the thoughts of mortals find it difficult to climb, is a place called the THIRD HEAVEN, or the HEAVEN OF HEAVENS. In that world is the Eternal City, the central seat of the great King. In the midst of the city, conspicuous, and under the wide-arching canopy above, is a throne, all resplendent with celestial glories, standing on a pavement of sapphire, and surrounded with a rainbow. On that throne sits the Ancient of Days, the Infinite, the Creator and Ruler of all worlds, and their final Judge. Not that he is limited to that place: for no boundaries of space can contain him. He fills immensity with his presence. But there, he reveals himself in peculiar glory. There, amidst attending angels, the first-born sons of light,—the thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, that bow around him, and wait his pleasure,—he holds the grand central court of his universal

kingdom, issuing thence his mandates and decisions, and dispensing thence his recompenses of justice and of love.

Amidst the ever-shifting glories of the place, a scene of unwonted interest presents itself. Before the throne appears a personage of shining character, clothed in robes of light, dignified, celestial in her aspect, yet with bended knee, and with a tear upon her cheek. She appears there in supplication; not for herself, but for others; an intercessor for offenders.

Heaven pauses in its movements, at the spectacle. Its songs are suspended. The attention of all the circling throngs is directed to her. As they wait, she speaks, and the opening of her plea is thus: Sire Eternal! the only Being self-existing, and from whom all other beings come, all-worthy! admit thy humble creature's utterance. Down through many a system of suns and planets, wheeling their mighty courses in the illimitable void; in far distant space beneath thy feet, is a speck of dust, not seen by any created eye from these heights. On that speck dwells a creature of humble grade, composed of dust himself in part, yet having a spark of intellectual being—a germ of immortality. That creature, though formed but last of all thy works, has sinned. O Sovereign of the universe! suffer a plea to be presented for his pardon!

While these words were being uttered, and the ranks of the heavenly hosts drew closer around, in still more eager attention, and amidst the deeper silence that prevailed, another personage appeared, and approached the throne. She was shining like the former, of heavenly mein, yet different in her aspect. She stood erect, and no tear was on her face. She never wept. She came, as the other ceased, to present a counter plea. Sovereign Judge! she said, the Just, the True! how can Mercy's plea be granted? (for Mercy was the name the former bore.) Justice has claims—claims which cannot be dispensed with. Man—that creature man—having sinned, must meet the recompenses due to sin. How can Justice be turned aside from her right?

Mercy interposed, in her beseeching tones; But man is frail, a creature of flesh and ignorance, a creature of a day; his being is obscure—among the smallest of the rational productions of the Creator's hands. His whole race, and the very globe they inhabit, would scarce be missed, were they blotted from existence. They are not so much as a single leaf of a flower-stalk, in the great garden of the Creator's works; not so much as a mote that flits in the sun-beam, to the milky-way. May not this creature be forgiven? May not the Infinite show compassion to so frail an existence as this? Will it shake the stability, and order, and happiness of other

worlds, to relax the claims of justice in behalf of so frail an existence as this? He is as nothing compared to Thee, O SOVEREIGN JUDGE! Yet his happiness is much to him. Turn from him the tokens of thy displeasure, and let him live.

Justice again presents her counter-plea. True, she says, compared with some other orders of being, man is frail, a creature of a day, ignorant and fleshly. Yet is he not beneath the notice of a moral Governor. Yet is he an appropriate subject of law. His nature places him in the rank of moral existences; with the power of distinguishing good from evil—right from wrong. He is endowed with the power of knowing his Creator—the Author and Sustainer of his being, with the power of knowing the law imposed upon him—of perceiving its equity and goodness; with a conscience placed within him, admonishing him, and urging him to duty. And to all this has been added much express instruction; the light of counsel, of warning, and of entreaty, being poured around him from the first hour of his creation, Did he not, at the very opening of his being, and amidst Eden's bowers and fruits, the gift of love, and emblem of heaven—did he not hear the Creator's voice? And has it not followed him through the whole course of his existence to bless him, had he not resisted it? And his frailty—does it not show itself mainly in virtue's cause? He is strong to do evil? He is strong in devices, and in the execution of purposes, for his own gratification. He is strong in contending with his brother; in wrongs and oppressions often; in shedding his brother's blood on the battle-field. In his conflicts, the ground often trembles beneath his tread. The very earth seems to reel under the shock of his contending hosts; and the very sun is darkened by the smoke and dust arising from his murderous strife. He is strong, often, in his impiety against the heavens. What forms of offence has he not practiced? Insignificant, in himself, he may, indeed, be, compared with some other beings: yet have not his crimes given him consequence? This creature man has dared to set at naught the authority of the Eternal Creator of the universe, and the universal King. He has knowingly transgressed, and continued to transgress. In defiance of the Almighty's voice, he plucked, he ate, of the forbidden tree. In defiance of that voice still, he walks in the sight of his own eyes, and after the desires of his own heart. With the Law in his hand—the Law of universal love—he has disregarded alike its requisitions and its threatenings, and filled the world with idolatry and irreligion, with corruption and crime. To the voice that would reclaim him, he is like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmers,

charming never so wisely. And are the claims of justice, continues this personage, on such a creature as this, of a slight or doubtful character? Must he not be judged according to the Law he has broken? according to his knowledge of that Law? according to his ability to keep or violate its precepts? Is it not right that he should be treated according to his moral character and conduct? that he be made to eat of the fruit of his own ways, and to be filled with his own devices? Is it not incumbent on the infinite Ruler of the universe to treat him thus? Has not the Law threatened death to the transgressor? and is not this a righteous penalty—demanded by truth and equity? And man having sinned, is there hence any thing for him but to die the death?

So spake Justice before the throne. And the plea seemed conclusive. What flaw can be discovered in the reasoning, or unsoundness in the premises on which it is based?

But Mercy, intent on her purpose, still finds an argument to urge in reply. Is not death, she says—the death threatened—an evil of too great magnitude to be inflicted? Can any creature endure it? Will the Infinite allow himself to award to any creature, however far from righteousness, so dreadful a doom? Art not Thou, O Sovereign of the universe, a Being of Mercy? Hast thou not revealed thyself thus to all creatures? Is not mercy one of thy chief glories? Will thou not, then, show thyself merciful to man? Exact not of him the great penalty of thy law. Glorify the attribute of thy mercy in his pardon. Let all the angels see it. Let all the universe see it, and render Thee corresponding praise. Pardon, O pardon thy creature man!

To which Justice rejoined: the threatened punishment is no more than sin deserves. If it is great, it is only so because sin is a great evil; is committed against a great, an infiuitely perfect and infinitely glorious God; is committed against an infinitely perfect and glorious law; and against boundless riches of goodness,—infinite, eternal, and unceasing love. Is not crime proportioned to the Being offended, and to obligations violated? And should not punishment bear a correspondence to the crime committed? What other rule can be found for punishment, but the enormity of the sin for which the punishment is inflicted? Then it must be great, for the sin is great. Moreover, the punishment, great as it may be, grows out of the very sin committed, as its natural consequence. A state of sin, when the sinner is abandoned to his condition, is itself death. It is the extinction of good within him, and the extinction of hope. It is the kindling up of evil passions, and the awakening of a sense of guilt, and fore

boding and terror. This, says Justice, is but the natural fruit of sin. And is it too much, that the sinner shall eat of the fruit of his own way? that he shall be left to reap what he has himself sown? If he render himself unfit for communion with God, is it too much if he be denied that communion? if he provoke God's frown, is it too much if he be left to feel that frown? If he take fire into his soul, can he complain if he be left to feel it burning there?

But further Justice pleads: Has not the Infinite declared that sin shall be thus punished? Has not the word gone forth from thy lips, O Eternal Sovereign! that "the wages of sin is death:" that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die?" Hast thou not uttered this from thy throne, and incorporated it into thy law for the government of the universe? Has not every angel heard it? And has it not gone forth to all worlds? Has it not rolled and reverberated through the arches of these heavens, for the instruction and warning of every creature, and as one of the grand truths for the guard of the moral universe—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die?" Is not this, in part, an exponent of the moral feelings, the moral nature of God? How, then, shall thy word be disregarded? How *can* the utterances of thy lips be set aside? Hath the Infinite *said*, and shall he not *do?* Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? What will angels say, if the word of the Eternal be broken? What will the universe say? Who will credit again the message that cometh forth from the throne? Who will believe again that Jehovah is true? Who again will tremble at his threatening, or fear to sin? Man pardoned, his sin unpunished, himself treated with favor in violation of the Law, the foundations of government are destroyed; the eternal throne is dishonored; the veracity of the Infinite is broken; the universe as the tidings extend, will lose their confidence in their King, and rebellion and confusion will be encouraged in every world. If one sinner may escape a righteous recompense, and that in violation of a solemnly uttered sentence, then may another, and another; and the government of the Infinite, the eternal Supreme, is undermined, and passes away for ever!

So Justice reasoned again. And Heaven saw and felt the cogency of her plea. If the INFINITE, she says, will have a government, he must have a law. And if he will maintain his government, he must adhere to his law, and carry out in practice the declared recompenses of good and of evil, as cases arise requiring them. He must honor his law; he must honor his throne; he must maintain his own veracity. "A God of truth, and without iniquity," it is declared of him, "just and right is he." And he must *show* himself thus, in order that the universe may rest in peace and quietness under the shadow of

his wings; move on in safety, and rejoice in his dominion. Man—Justice repeats—cannot be pardoned. He has sinned; and he must feel the consequences of his sin. To release him, would be a wrong done to every holy being in existence. It would render the standing of every other being less secure. Jehovah's treatment involves fundamental principles—principiples underlying the universal whole. And those principles violated in his case, the universal whole must feel the deranging influence.

Man, then, must die. Even Mercy can say no more. Even she herself is convinced that favor to him would be cruelty to the whole universe besides. She bows in silence, though still sorrowing at the destruction which awaits him. Man is bound, and delivered over to the executioner's power, and the sword of justice is lifted over him.

At this awful moment, another scene arrests attention. From the light inaccessible which surrounds the throne, and stretches far back in its insufferable brightness—a light before which ten thousand suns, condensed into one, would cease to shine and become black as sackcloth of hair; from that light there comes forth a PERSONAGE, unseen before, partaker in the Godhead. With "the Ancient of days" he had been for ever, "as one brought up with him:" and "his delights had been with the sons of men." With infinite pity, he approaches the eternal Sire, and says: On me be the wrong of Man. On me, sovereign Judge! place man's burden. Of me let Justice exact her utmost claims on man's account. I my life will give for his; will drink the bitter draught prepared for him. On me the violated law shall have its course. By me, descending to the world of sin, and dwelling in flesh like its lost inhabitants, and yielding up my life a sacrifice to thee, in their behalf, shall law be honored, and veracity and equity sustained, and man, accepting the proffered favor, shall live.

Deep silence was in heaven. Rapt wonder and awe held its circling throngs. The Eternal Sire assented to the Son. A light, a glory shone, such as heaven itself had not before seen. Mercy and Justice bowed together before the throne, and bowed together before the wondrous Deliverer, and owned him for their Lord. Justice herself wept: (she never wept before). Her claims were met, and in a way that made even her heart relent. And suddenly, bursting from all the lips of the blessed, there went up a song, in strains like the voice of many waters, and like mighty thunderings, and harpers harping with their harps, saying, Alleluia! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" "A Just God, and a Savior!" "Mercy and Truth are

met together: Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other!"

Thus "MERCY REJOICETH AGAINST JUDGMENT."

But the vision presents one feature more. Man must hear what Heaven has devised in his behalf. On the Great Messenger, in his errand to the world, Mercy and Justice are both attendants: Mercy pleased to see the work for which her spirit sighed go forward, and Justice pleased to see no jot or tittle of her claims abated.

Mercy, in the earth, shows herself still allied to heaven. Everywhere she speaks soothingly to human woe. Everywhere she calls men to avail themselves of the great salvation. She leaves no place where human beings are to be found, unvisited. She goes even into loathsome dungeons, and dens of crime and misery, pointing the victims of sin to Him who saves the lost. She is on the embattled plain, pleading with the contending hosts to stay their vengeful strife, and both, repenting of their own sins, to bow in unison before the Prince of peace. She is with the highwayman on the land, and the pirate on the seas, and the evil-doer in every place, warning against the nefarious deeds which drag down their perpetrators to the lake of fire, and bidding them turn, and "flee from the wrath to come." She is in every chamber of sickness, and abode of sorrow, speaking of Him who assuages pain, and wipes the mourner's tears, and prepares mansions where sorrow does not come. She is with man under all visitations of judgment and correction, whispering in his ear the divine instruction they are intended to convey, and urging obedience to their monitions. She accompanies every message of the gospel, with a heart in deep sympathy with every call, with every argument of persuasion, with every appeal. She rejoiceth over every sinner that repenteth. She witnesses, with throbbing delight, the spreading, rising kingdom of redemption: and will stand, at last, at the right hand of the Judge, beholding the grand result, in multitudes which no man can number, gathered from every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation, into the realms of glory; the grand result of new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, compared with which "the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind;" the grand result, accompanied with the loud acclaim of triumph: the universe bursting forth in rapturous praise: "He hath done all things well!" "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

So Mercy shall see her desire accomplished. While Justice, through all this scene by her side, is not less pleased to see her own claims all met. No truth is sacrificed. No bright attribute of Jehovah is tarnished. No principle of equity and good government is violated, or weakened. On the contrary, all is strengthened. Even Justice herself never appeared in such brightness before, never received such honor before, as is reflected back upon her from the wondrous work of redeeming love. Mercy triumphs to the advantage of her very rival, as well as of herself, and the dying race of man.

I see, says the considerate man, where my hope of eternal life, and the hope of my race, must begin. Not in justice. If justice carries through her claim upon us, she cuts us off, and sends us to endless death. Not in mercy, simply and alone considered. Mercy has no plea strong enough to prevail in behalf of a sinner like man. If she should screen man, at the expense of justice, the very throne of the Eternal would be sullied, and his character tarnished, and his universal dominion shaken and destroyed. Our hope of eternal life must begin in the interposition of the Son of God. When I hear a voice from the excellent glory, saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, but a body hast thou prepared me: Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O God!" then I look up, and begin to see how a sinner may live. When I read the gracious declaration of a later time, that God has "so loved the world, that he has given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" then I see how a sinner can live. When I turn my eye to Calvary, and behold there the great VICTIM, groaning, bleeding, dying, amidst the darkened heavens, and rending rocks, and quaking earth, and under the hidings of the Father's face, forcing from him the cry, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and learn elsewhere the cause of this to be, that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,"—that "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" then I see how a sinner can live.

> "Oh! the sweet wonders of that cross,
> Where Christ, the Saviour, lov'd and died:
> Her noblest life my spirit draws,
> From his dear wounds and bleeding side."

I learn hence, says the devout Christian, my obligation. I am at the communion-table. This is not an empty ceremony. It is not a mere fraternal act, or token of kindred feeling among the participants. This, indeed, it is: but it is also much more. It is a memorial of the Son of God, in whom

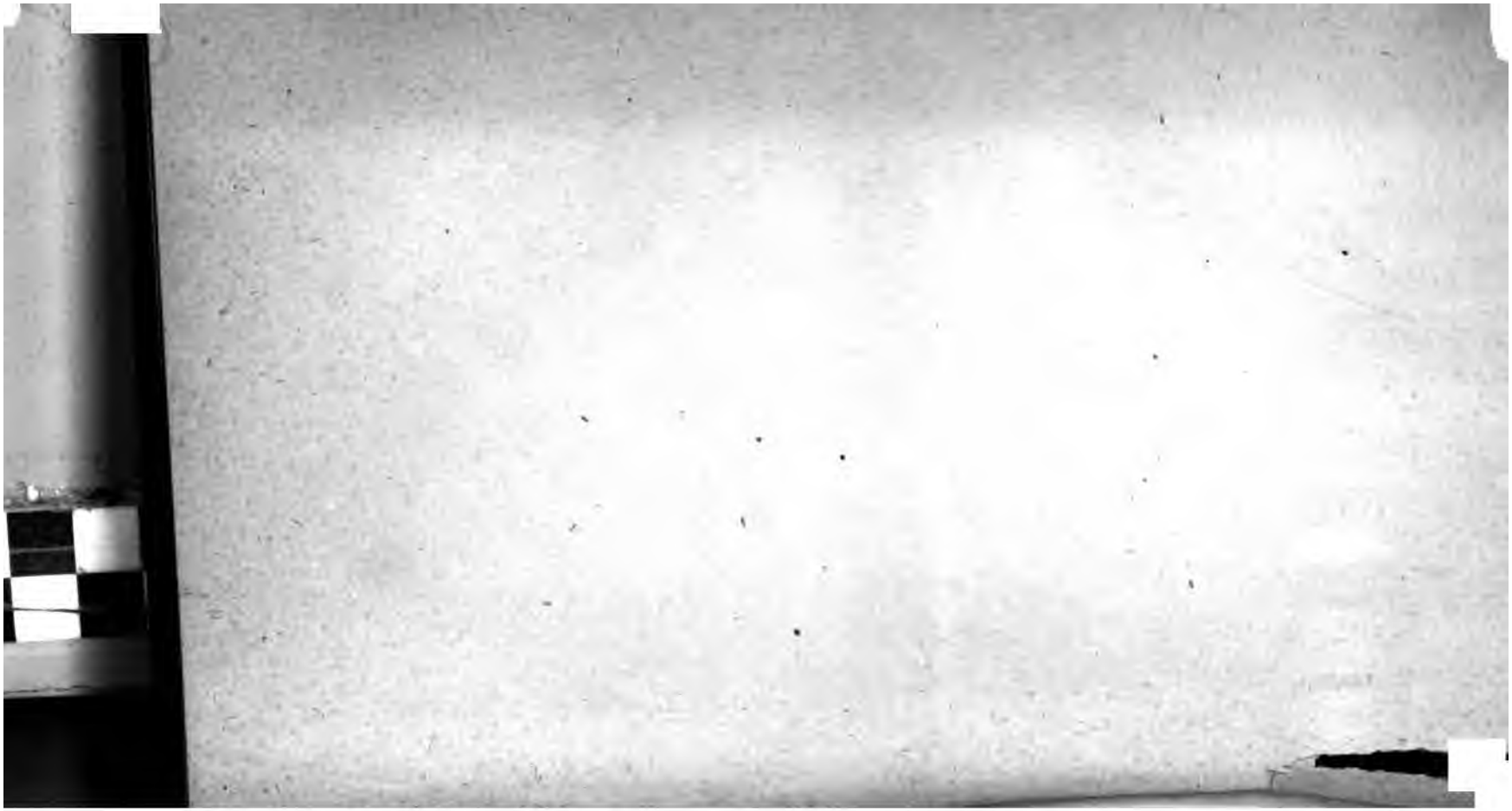
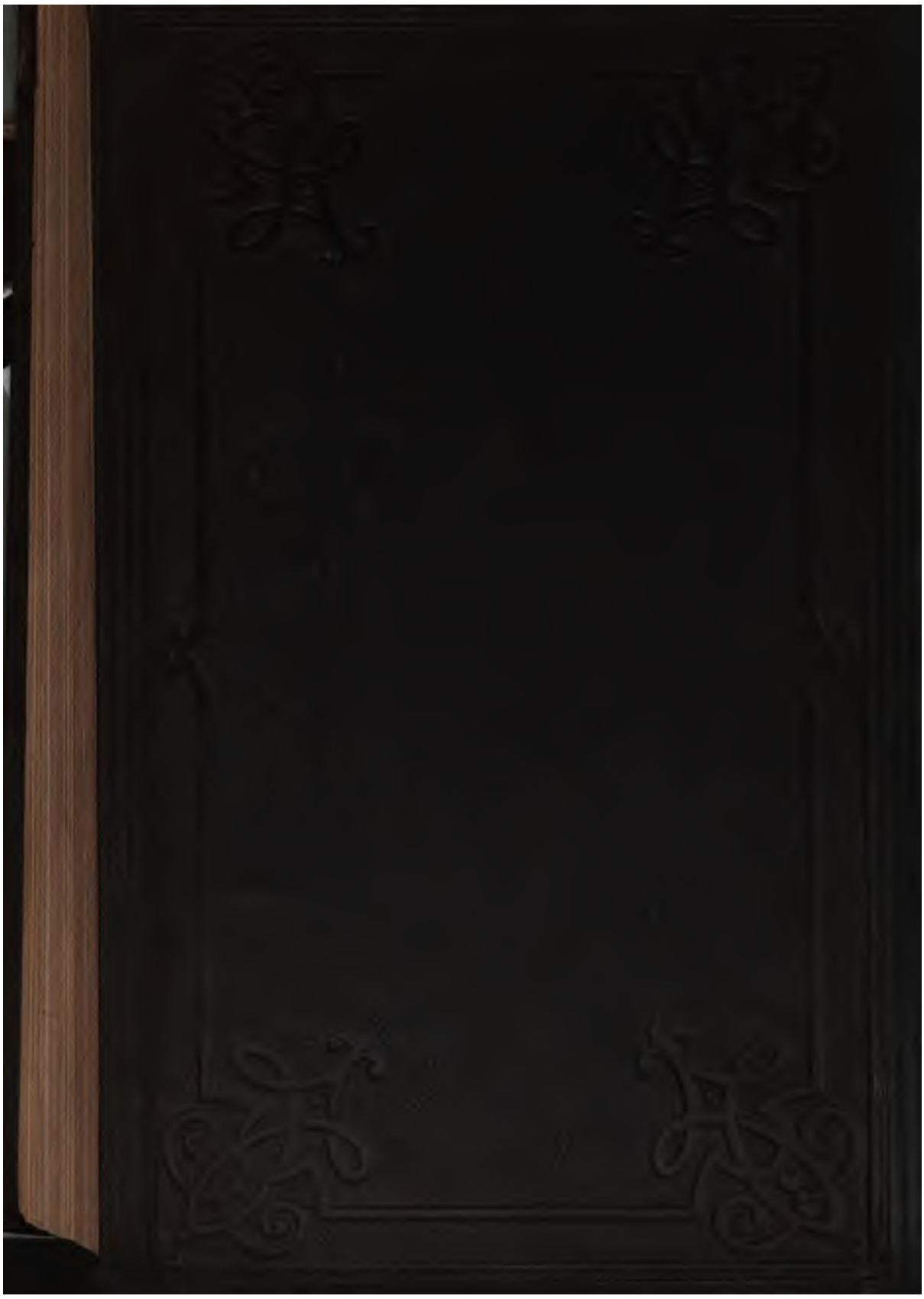
new foundations for communion are laid. It is a memorial of him, in that great hour, when he offered himself in heaven as man's Redeemer. It is a memorial of him in that great hour, when he came to execute the purpose of his love :—when first he appeared in the flesh, and angelic voices sung, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will to men!" and when afterward, on Calvary, "he, through the eternal Spirit, offered up himself without spot to God," for the life of the world. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!" "Herein is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This communion is a memorial of him now in heaven, preparing a place for his chosen, that they may, after a little while, be with him there for ever. Here I think on his humiliation in leaving the abodes of light for this dark world. Here I think on his toils, his pains, his death, the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear; the untold agonies of Gethsemane, and the still deeper woes of Calvary, when his spirit sank beneath its mighty load, uncheered with the Father's love: and here I think on his expiring groan, when the heavens were hung in mourning, and earth quaked to her centre, in sympathy with the great sufferer. And now what shall I render for the Father's love? And what shall I render to the eternal Son, for his interposing mercy in my behalf? O how pregnant with meaning is the voice of inspiration, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God, in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Surely my bonds are infinite, and indissoluble. "The love of Christ constraineth me." May I never forget that I am purchased. May I never forget the price paid for me. May I live answerable to the immortal hopes thus open before me, and before my needy race. O God! seal me for thine; and make me faithfully, unceasingly, eternally thine!

Let no man hope for heaven without a Saviour. Justice cannot save you. She can only condemn. Mercy, in itself alone, cannot save you. She has no power to remove the condemnation of the law, or to wash the spirit and make it meet for heaven. There is no hope, but in the Son of God. As he himself says, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And as the apostle says, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved;" "who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption." Let every one see here the only ground of hope. "He that hath the Son of God, hath life. He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." "But the wrath of

God abideth on him." Whosoever thou art, thou needest this salvation. Come, then, to Him who bestows it, and live! Come, renouncing every other ground of hope. Come, confessing that Justice cannot save you; that Mercy alone cannot save you; that there is no created power in the heights or depths that can reach your case. Come, making Christ your all, believing in him, following him, obeying him. Come, and devote yourself to him, and live to him. Then you shall be saved. Under his grace, sin will disappear from your soul. Forgiveness shall flow to you as a river. And, when you have filled up the measure of service required of you here, he will take you to those glorious empyrean heights where he reigns, and there bless you with his favor for ever.

WHAT SO NEEDFUL FOR US AS A PLACE IN CHRIST'S REMEMBRANCE?

Let me live in daily remembrance of Him who loved me, and gave himself for me; and when my last hour is come—when skill is baffled, and friends can only weep around my couch, and coldness is creeping through my frame, and the light of life leaving my eyes, and I feel myself throttled by the "King of Terrors," and know that in a moment I must part with earth, and go down alone into the dark grave, never more to return—then, *Lord, remember me.*

And when the sepulchres are bursting, and the dead are starting to life at the sound of the archangel's trump, and the judgment is set, and the books are opened, and the Judge comes forth, clothed with righteousness and armed with omnipotence; and I find myself of the number of those who, according to their works, are to be allotted to happiness or woe forever; and *feel myself to be a sinner*, without the power to escape or the tongue to speak—O! then, *remember me!*

Through life's pilgrimage, all I ask is, a place in *thy remembrance*; and in the hour of death, though the world forget me, and friends desert me, and my bed be made in poverty, and my body racked by pain, give me but thy faintest smile, and I *die happy!*—*Dr. Dickinson.*